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DARKY JUMBLE'S WILD RIDE.

BY BARRY RINGGOLD.



"THE FIRST WHO LAYS A HAND ON MY FATHER DIES!" THE BOY FUGITIVE CRIED.

Darky Jumble's Wild Ride;

OR,

TOM TABOR, THE BOY FUGITIVE.

A Romance of Colorado Hills.

BY BARRY RINGGOLD,
AUTHOR OF "LITTLE BUCK," "OLD TRAPS,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE ATTACK.

I MUST be near Central City, now. I'm pretty well blown, and can't go much further to-day. Halloa! if those people yonder are not Indians I'm much mistaken!"

The person thus speaking to himself was a boy of sixteen, tall and strong for his age, with ruddy cheeks and clear, sparkling blue eyes. He wore a gray cloth suit and carried a good rifle, besides which he had a long hunting-knife thrust in a broad leather belt about his waist. An ammunition-pouch and a well-stocked wallet were slung over his shoulders, from which, hanging crossways over his breast and back, was also suspended a good rubber blanket.

His present situation was near Long's Peak, Colorado, among the Rocky Mountains, and the Indians to whom he had alluded were about a quarter of a mile distant, descending a rugged hill ahead of him.

It was the hour of twilight, and the boy had been about selecting a halting-place for the night in some one of the hollows which were in his vicinity, among the rocks.

As he spoke he climbed to an elevated rock, difficult of ascent, and cocking his piece, placed himself behind a ridge whence he could watch the approaching savages.

The latter, numbering four men, were fierce, stout-looking fellows, wearing leggings and blankets, two of the party carrying rifles, and the others having long spears.

That they had seen the lad was evident from their quickened pace, although they did not appear to notice him.

At length, having reached the base of the rock on which he stood, they halted, while one, raising his dusky, rugged visage, acted as spokesman.

"Ugh! where's niz?" he grunted.

"Who the deuce is nig?" said the boy. "I don't know any such person."

"Him call him Jumble, but him black-face—very black—little boy like you."

"Just pack that, won't you? I'm not used to being compared to a nigger."

"Has the white boy not seen him?"

"No. What have I to do with him?"

"Ugh! nig been steal from Crow. Crow want to take back what he steal from him. That is all."

"What did he steal from you?"

"Little white balls on string."

"You mean beads?"

"It is so."

"Well, if I should happen to see him, I will tell him that you want your beads."

"Think nig up there, on same rock where boy is. He hide there, perhaps in hollow. We will come up and see."

"That's too thin! I haven't lived in Colorado a year for nothing. I know a thing or two, or my name isn't Tom Tabor. Just 'walk,' won't you?" added the lad, pointing his rifle over the ledge.

The savages appeared to withdraw, and were soon out of sight in the gloom.

"Hi! hi! hi! yab! yab! yab! I'll bu'st dis stomach, shuah, listenin' to dat brave boy!"

The laughter, and the words with which it was blended, came from a hole in the rocks just behind Tom, who, on turning, now dimly beheld a woolly head, with a black face, as round as an apple, and the whites of two great, rolling eyes protruded through the aperture.

"Halloa! a live nigger!" cried the lad in surprise. "How long have you been here?"

"Been heah half hour. Berry glad you come to help Jim Jumble."

"How do you know I'm going to help you? You ought to give those beads I see about your neck, to the Indians, who say you stole them."

"Dey lies. Dem beads belong to de missus—dar's de fac' out and out, and dem Injuns want to steal de same and scalp dis nig. Dat am de bressed truf, and nuffin' but de truf—so help me and de Lord!"

"Who is the 'missus'?"

"Young lady, Miss Lormer. She goin' to see place where poor fadder been killed—and dis nig go 'long to take car' ob her, as well as to act de part ob a darin' scout!"

At these words, Tom became as pale as death: but whatever the cause might have been, his attention was now diverted from the subject by a movement on the part of the Indians, who taking advantage of the diversion caused by his seeing the negro, had again stolen up and started to climb the rock.

"Ho! therel you red-skins!" shouted Tom. "Just 'snake' back again the way you came, and make tracks!"

The Indians, however, had dodged behind projecting shelves of rock, which would screen them from Tom's rifle, and they showed no disposition to leave the place.

"Give beads, and Indian go his way!" grunted the one who had spoken before.

"You can't have them," said Tom. "They belong to a young lady, who was in company with the 'darky.'"

As the lad spoke, his breast and head were incautiously exposed. One of the Indians' rifles cracked, and a bullet passed within an inch of his ear.

Jumble, who had crawled out of the hole, rolled over and over, kicking up his heels.

Bang! went another rifle, at that moment, followed by a succession of cries from Jumble, who, turning head-over-heels, commenced to rub his left "shin" with one hand, while he felt of his head with the other.

"T'ank Jeremiah! de head am still dar, but oh! oh! oh! ah-whooh! ah-whooh! ah-whooh!" he yelled, as he continued to rub his "shin."

"What's the matter? Are you hit?" inquired Tom.

But Jumble only howled the louder, and his companion believed that the last bullet had slightly "barked" his ankle.

"Shut up, will you!" the boy cried, impatiently. "You've got only a scratch!"

Keeping good watch of the Indians, Tom prevented them from ascending the rock, which they could do only on one side.

The darkness of night hid the lurking forms of his enemies from his gaze.

"Here, Jumble, you keep watch behind that boulder, while I look out from this ledge," said the boy.

Jumble shook with terror, his teeth rattling and the whites of his eyes rolling as he placed himself at his post. More than once he bobbed quickly down, dodging aside, on seeing the dim outlines of the savages, and bumping his woolly head against the hard rock, yet not seeming to mind these thumps, which would have hurt the softer skull of a white person.

Suddenly as he stood on the edge of the high a loose piece of rock gave way under him, precipitating him to the base of the elevation. As this was only eleven feet high, and as Jumble landed upon a mass of branches, which, lately, had been piled under the rock to serve some hunter for a couch, he was unhurt.

The Indians, who were on the other side, and who, in the gloom, had not seen him drop, were not aware that he had left the rock.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEETING.

GOLLY!" muttered Jumble to himself, "dat white boy come to sabe me jes' in time, and I hopes dat he won't suffer for de same. As one good turn obserbs anudder, I'll help dat chap, in de bes' way I can. I'll jes' streak it to Central City, and see 'Trapper John, and tell him 'bout dat feller, and den we come togedder to sabe his skin."

He ran along at a breakneck pace, not pausing to draw breath until he gained a hill, from which, in the far distance, he could see the lights of Central City.

Several hours later he arrived there, made his way to a hut, on the door of which he knocked.

At first no attention was paid to his summons, but, at length, the door opened, and a boy's face was thrust out into the gloom.

"I knowed yer knock, Jim Jumble," he said. "Whar hev yer been, and what's the news?"

"I will tell yer, Trapper John, ef yer let me in."

The trapper allowed the negro to enter the hut, the light in which now fell full upon the little grotesque figure of the darky, who was apparently about fifteen years old. He wore a round, gray cloth cap, with a torn crown, through which his woolly hair protruded. The cap came down to his eyebrows, without concealing his enormous ears.

An old blue jacket, with brass buttons, scarcely reached his waist, about which was a belt.

containing two enormous horse-pistols, of which he seemed very proud. His pants of blue woolen stuff, hardly came down to his "shins," small as he was, and his ankles being skinny, made his large feet, incased in cowhide shoes, seem even larger than they really were.

The person whom he had called "Trapper John," was a boy of sixteen, of a thickset, muscular figure, with a scarred, fierce-looking face. He was clad in semi hunter costume, and was heavily armed with pistols, bowie-knife and rifle.

"Sabe him, sah, sabe him!" cried Jim Jumble.

"Save whom? What yer talkin' about?"

"Dat white boy what I so gloriously stood up fur, till dar was nuffin' left fur me to stan' on!"

It was some minutes ere the young trapper could obtain from Jumble a clear explanation of his meaning.

"I will go and see what I kin do," he then said. "You kin foller on behind."

"You can depen' on me. Dis nig will stay by you t'rough ebberyt'ing."

The trapper took a rifle from a corner, and soon, with Jumble, he emerged from the hut, the door of which he locked after him.

The two had not proceeded far, when, all at once, the negro came running up to the hunter.

"Dar's some one comin', and dar may be more dan one. S'posin' dis nig run back to hunt for more help?"

And he was about to take to his heels when his companion seized him by his shirt-collar.

"None o' that, nig!" he said sternly. "Ef thar's to be fightin', you shall stand up to it like a man, which is the best way to get used to sech things."

Jumble's teeth began to chatter.

The forms drew nearer.

"Who comes thar?" cried the trapper, cocking his rifle.

"It is I—Tom Tabor!" answered a boyish voice. "There are half a dozen Indians after me!"

The trapper started and an exclamation as of surprise escaped him.

"Come on," he then said. "Thar's an earth-ridge byar, behind which we kin make a stand. I'll help you all I kin!"

The boy was soon at the speaker's side. On seeing Jumble, whose black face could hardly be distinguished in the gloom, Tom uttered a cry of anger.

"You miserable little imp! You left me nicely in the lurch, didn't you?"

"Dis nig run to bring help—dat's de way it was. See, now, I bring Massa John."

"If an enemy had started up in front of you, you would have run the other way," said the lad. "The Indians managed to climb the rock, when I thought they had all gone. I stumbled down before they could capture me, and made off."

The dim forms of the savages were seen fast approaching through the gloom.

"Now, then," said the trapper, "they are near enough for a shot."

He and Tom took aim and fired. Jumble also

mustered courage enough to fire off one of his pistols.

The Indians, thinking that the boy had met with a large party of friends, slunk off, and were soon lost to view in the gloom.

"You have done me a great service," said Tom to the young trapper. "But for you, I suppose I should have been scalped."

"Yes, you'd probable hev had yer ha'r lifted, but why hev yer come out in this perilous wilderness?"

"I come from Denver and I am going to Central City to find out whether or not a story I have heard about my father is true or only a report."

"Let me heer all about it, and p'raps I kin tell you something 'bout the thing," said John, "as I'm jest from the city."

"Well, then, the truth is that I was told by a person, lately come from these parts, that my father had killed a certain sheriff named Robert Lormer—in fact that—that he had murdered him!"

"What was yer father's name?"

"Ned Tabor. He was known by the name of Trapper Ned!"

"Then I'm mou'ty sorry to say that it's true, every word of it. Yer father did murder Lormer!"

Tom gave a cry of anguish.

"No use of takin' it so much to heart."

"It is hard to bear," answered Tom. "Had he killed the man in a quarrel, it would not be quite so bad."

"I reckon it's a long time since yer've seen yer father?" said John.

"Five years," replied Tom. "He went away on a trapping expedition, just five years ago, telling my mother that he hoped to do well, and would be back before long. A few months after he set out mother died, and I went to live with an uncle. Father wrote back on hearing the news, telling me to stay with my uncle in Denver, and go to school until his return. Six months ago, he sent me word that he was coming home. Then, all at once, while I was expecting him, I heard that horrible story of the murder!"

"It is true, every word of it," said John, sternly, "and I am one of the lynch-law boys who are hunting for him to bring him to justice! There is a gang of us, and we are called the LYNCH-GANG WOLVES!"

"You are hunting for my father?"

"Yes," the boy answered, "I am now looking for him."

"In that case we part company," said Tom.

And, shouldering his rifle, without another word, he plunged into the darkness, to soon pass out of sight.

CHAPTER III.

A GIRL'S PERIL.

As Tom Tabor moved on, he stumbled against a human body, and was thrown to the ground. Looking closely at the form stretched out before him, he was enabled to perceive that it was a dead Indian—evidently one of the Crows who had advanced to attack him and Trapper John.

As he raised himself from the ground, his hand came in contact with something which he knew by the feeling was a bullet.

The moment he reached a place where he could be sheltered from the strong wind, which was now blowing almost a gale, he struck a match, and examined the piece of lead.

"Good!" he cried, with a feeling of relief. "So it was not *my* bullet, after all, which passed through that Indian's head, for this one is shaped differently from those I have with me."

He kept on, and finally reaching an alcove among the mountains, he concluded to pass the night here.

"Early in the morning," he muttered, "I will go on. I must try to find my father, and from his own lips hear him confess that he perpetrated the crime he is accused of before I believe it."

Spreading his rubber blanket, he threw himself upon it; and thoroughly worn out with his late exertions, he soon dropped into a deep slumber.

He was awakened at about midnight by a deafening roar. A blinding flash of lightning danced before him, and he heard the pealing of thunder.

In fact, a terrific storm was raging. The wind howled with fury, the bending pines about the cliff made a noise like an angry sea, as the gale rushed through them, and the rain came down, crashing and spattering upon the rocks with the din of a hundred cataracts.

Saturated by the rain which blew into the hollow, the boy sprung to his feet.

All at once he uttered a cry of surprise. A flash had shown him, upon one of the rocky plateaus about fifty yards off, the form of a black horse, standing motionless, with a young girl seated on its back.

He was sure he saw both, and yet, when the next flash came, horse and girl were gone.

"She has probably ridden on out of sight," thought Tom. "I shouldn't wonder if she's some one who has lost her way in the storm."

He moved toward the plateau, lighted on his way by the occasional flashes, and finally gained the spot where the vision had appeared. Now, however, it was not there.

At last the light of dawn helped him. Looking from a hollow, in which he had sought shelter, he beheld a scene that thrilled him with dismay.

The storm, raging with redoubled fury, had swollen a descending mountain stream not far off, so that its waters, overflowing their rocky bed, were now sweeping along on their way in a broad sheet of hissing foam and whirlpools, which must engulf anything they should meet in their course. Dashing along a broad ledge that projected from the side of one of the cliffs, the boy beheld the horse upon which was mounted the girl he had previously seen.

The steed had evidently taken fright at something, and was making straight for a rocky barrier under the swollen torrent which, partly arrested by projecting masses and shelves of rock, was coming down with the din of thunder toward the ledge.

In a few minutes it must strike girl and horse.

sweeping them from their position into a deep abyss below, unless the courser could be turned the other way.

The girl was making frantic but useless efforts to control the steed, which, with dilated nostrils and fiery eyes, fairly seemed to fly along the edge of the perilous abyss. Should the animal on meeting the rugged barrier ahead rear sideways, as it probably would do, the fate of the rider was certain—she would then be thrown into the deep, yawning gulf, to be dashed to pieces hundreds of feet below.

Scrubby bushes and roots afforded the boy a hold, as he rapidly descended the rocky wall which was between him and the ledge.

In a minute after starting he gained a projecting point on the rugged barrier the frightened steed was approaching, but from here it would be impossible for him to reach the ledge in time to help the imperiled maiden.

Taking a rope, which, with other useful articles, he carried in his wallet, he formed a slip-noose on the end of it. The projection he occupied was about ten feet above the ledge, and he rapidly made his calculations as to the way he should throw his lasso.

Horse and rider were soon near enough for him to perform his intended maneuver.

"Hold up one of your arms," he shouted, "and I will try to save you."

The girl could not hear him very distinctly, but she understood him; and as Tom threw the lasso with precision, the loop caught under the upraised arm.

"Now seize the rope with both hands!" yelled the boy, as the horse reared to one side.

The rider caught at the rope, holding firmly to it with both hands, while the horse, bolting from under her, plunged headlong into the deep abyss, uttering one unearthly jibber as it was dashed to death upon the rocks far below.

The girl, clinging to the rope, landed upon her feet on the ledge. She seemed confused, and let go the rope.

A roar as of many thunders sounded above her. The descending torrent, with its sheets of white, foaming water, now was not fifty feet above her head.

She looked up, understood her peril, and turned as if to run.

"No use of runnin'; you can't escape that way," said Tom. "Put the noose around you again and I will haul you up."

He spoke in a quick, sharp, ringing voice, best calculated to enforce compliance.

The young woman put the noose about her, clutched the rope, and Tom commenced to haul.

It was hard work, but this lad was very strong, and when, the next moment, the avalanche of waters, with a deafening crash, struck the spot where she had just stood, the girl hung several feet above them.

Roaring and tumbling, they rose up almost to her neck, as if "determined" not to be cheated of their intended victim; but Tom, having taken a turn with the rope about a rock near him, reached far down and clutching the imperiled one by the shoulder, slowly and steadily, assisted by her own efforts, held her firmly

until the first mass of waters had tumbled into the abyss.

Then he again proceeded to haul, and a few minutes later she was safe at his side.

She was a brunette, about fourteen years of age, and Tom thought he had never seen a lovelier creature. A deep rose color had succeeded the paleness caused by terror; and her great black eyes, bright and vivacious, were turned up gratefully toward the lad, while, with one little hand, she pushed back the dark tresses of magnificent hair that escaped from under her broad straw hat.

Her first words were characteristic of her sex.

"See! the rain has spoiled my hat!" she said, as she took off her hat and shook it.

The boy could not help laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" she inquired, a little piqued. "I do not feel like laughing."

"Beg pardon," said Tom, bowing. "It is no time to laugh. You have had a narrow escape."

"It was good and brave of you to save me, and I thank you much," she said.

"To see you flying along that dangerous ledge, almost took the spunk out of me," continued the boy.

"Such a time as I have had," said the girl, sadly. "I lost my way among the mountains. It might have been better had I staid in Central City, last night, instead of purchasing a horse there to continue my journey."

"Yes, I can believe you. It is hard lines for a young lady to be traveling alone in this wild country. Will you go back to the city?"

"I don't want to go back there!" was the quick answer.

She pouted, stamped one little foot, and tears came to her eyes.

"May I ask why?"

"Because—because—some one is there I don't like. He has followed me."

"Tell me his name!" said Tom, fiercely.

"No, I don't want any quarrel, on my account, but tell me if you have seen a little negro, who answers to the name of Jim Jumble? He was with me to help me on my journey, and to act as a sort of scout, but we got separated by his going off for birds' eggs, when I think he must have lost his way. He had my pearl beads with him. I had given them to him to take off one of the pearls, which had become broken."

Tom started, and a ghastly paleness overspread his face.

"Yes," he answered, "I have seen your Jumble, and I now know that you are the daughter of—of—"

"Of the sheriff who was murdered!" put in the girl. "Yes, it is true. My name is Minnie Lormer!"

CHAPTER IV.

JUMBLE'S STORY.

FOR several moments after hearing the name of the girl whom he had rescued, Tom was too agitated to speak.

"How she would hate me," he thought, "if she knew I was the son of the man who is said

to have killed her father. I cannot muster courage to tell her."

"I am going," continued Minnie, "to see the place where my father was killed. It will be a poor satisfaction, still it will be a little," she added, with tears in her eyes.

"It is some distance from here, I believe," said Tom.

"Yes, about thirty miles, I should think—on the shore of Black creek."

"Might there not be some doubt of your father's having been killed by Ned Tabor, as it is reported? I understand that he was not *seen* to do the deed."

"There is, in my opinion, no doubt of it. Tabor and my father were together, near the creek—were seen there by some passing hunters. The hunters went on, and had entered a thicket, which hid the two from their gaze, when they heard a shot. A few minutes later they saw Tabor rushing along the bank, looking pale and agitated. They called to him to stop and tell them what the matter was, but he kept on, and was soon out of sight. The hunters went to the shore of Black creek, and there they found the sheriff's hat. There were marks on the ground as of a struggle and as if some one had fallen or had been pushed into the water. My father had evidently been killed by Tabor and thrown into the stream, which has a rapid current. His body was searched for, but it could not be found. It is supposed that it was drawn by the current into some one of the many under-water cavities, which are known to be beneath the bank. Tabor, I believe, has not yet been discovered, although many persons are hunting for him—among others a fierce gang of young fellows who are called the LYNCH-LAW WOLVES."

"Circumstances are against him—that's a fact," said the boy, sadly.

Then he changed the subject.

"Come, I will make a fire, so that you can dry your clothes."

"Where will you get wood? It rains no longer, but every stick you can find will be wet."

"I noticed a pile of dry branches in a hollow, on the cliff above us."

As he spoke, Tom perceived a ledge, which led up the side of the elevation, half concealed by shrubbery.

By means of this ledge the twain soon reached the summit of the height. Tom found the hollow he had spoken of, and, with the dry branches there he made a fire. He spread his rubber blanket on a small boulder, which would serve his companion for a seat, and, while she was drying her wet dress, he took some corn-cake and some pieces of venison from his wallet.

"We'll have breakfast," he said. "It will not be a very good one, but it is better than nothing."

Minnie partook of her repast, and said she had enjoyed her meal.

The sky gradually cleared, and at length the sun shone brightly upon the mountains. After the girl had rested, she and Tom resumed their journey.

"I, too, would like to see the place where

your father met his death," the boy had said, "and if you do not object, I will go with you."

Minnie had not objected; on the contrary she had seemed pleased at having so brave an escort.

Two days later they reached Black creek—a stream, with a few rocks and a thicket on one side, and huge, towering cliffs on the other. Minnie wandered sadly along the bank, now and then shuddering as she looked at the dark, swift waters, and at the black earth-caves, visible beneath the surface.

The boy, with his face turned from her, gazed, meanwhile, at the marks on the ground, now nearly obliterated, where it was supposed that a struggle had taken place.

At length he turned, but he noticed that Minnie was gone.

"She has probably passed round that rock ahead," he thought.

On looking behind the rock, however, he could not see the girl.

Her footprints on the damp ground led him toward a flat rock, further on. When he reached this, he lost the trail. He looked on every side, but nowhere, beyond the rock could he see Minnie's foot-marks.

"Strange enough," he muttered.

He continued his search for a long time, but in vain.

As he moved on through the thicket, he stumbled over something crouching in a mass of shrubbery.

There was a yell of terror, and he saw before him the negro boy, Jumble, with his little round body and woolly head, crouching, face to the ground.

"Hoo! hoo! de tomerhawk! Oh! don't use it, good Injun, on dis poor nigger! He nebber do nuffin' ag'in' ye', and he'll nebber do nuffin' more! Leabe him his scalp, for dar not much ha'r on his head, nohow!"

"Ugh!" grunted Tom, imitating the tone of an Indian. "Wool do for patch leggins!"

"Oh! mudah! mudah!" shrieked Jumble. "Help! help! somebody! I's gwine to be killed, shuah!"

Tom drew his knife, and lightly pricked the back of the boy's ankles with it; but no sooner did he feel the touch of the blade than Jumble commenced to turn somersets after somersets, receding from his tormentor like a black ball. He was about to throw himself headlong into a hollow, when Tom, springing forward, caught him by the arm and held him.

"Stop, you foolish nigger!" he said. "Had you turned you would have seen that I am no Indian!"

On hearing these words Jumble sprung up with a cry of joy, and commenced to caper round and round the lad.

"There, that will do," said Tom. "To tell the truth, although I joked with you, I am not much in a jacking mood. Have you seen anything of Miss Lormer?"

"Ob de young missus? No! Hab you seen de missus?"

In a few words Tom explained.

Then Jumble rolled the whites of his eyes, and looked much distressed.

"I's 'fraid Injun got dat missus!"

"What makes you think so?"

"It am a long story. In de fust place, after you lef' us, John and I go back to Central City. I no like be wid John. Him not bad fellah, but him make little nig work too hard. De truf am dat, in de fus' place, I was wid missus. We sot out togedder from near Denver, whar she live. Dat John, he want to be sweet on her, and he want to coteh up wid her for de escort! Jes' as if," added Jumble, drawing himself up, "dis brack boy am not de bravest ob de brave, and wouldn't make a better escort hisself dan all de 'John-jams' put togedder! Well de long and de short ob it am dat missus and I got separated, and I fall in wid John who is lookin' for missus, as well as for de man what kill de sheriff. De odder day, while John and me war huntin' for missus, we got separated 'mong de mountains, and I see Injun, and hide on rock. What happen af'er dat you know. At las' I concluded, af'er de most maturest reflection, to leabe John, and go on alone to hunt for missus. Dis af'ernoon I got heah in de shurbberbum, and I seen a big Injun go by. Den I hide myself as you see, and dat's why I t'ought you was de Injun, and dat's why I's 'fraid dat Injun take missus away."

"How long ago did you see the Indian?"

"About half an hour."

"That looks as if the savage had carried her off," said Tom, "but I heard no cry."

"Injun mou't have put his hand over her mouf, or he mou't have knocked her down 'fore he tuk her off."

"Well, Jumble, we must do our best to find and rescue her."

"Sart'in! If dar's anyt'ing I can do—if I hab to go t'rough fire and water, I'll do it to sabe missus."

"Come on, then," said Tom. "I wish I knew what direction it is best to take."

Jumble scratched his woolly head.

"De canoe couldn't go ag'in' de tide," he said, profoundly. "De philosoffity ob de t'ing am dat, whicsomever way de waters flows, dat's de way anyt'ing on de water will go. For instant," added Jumble, striking an attitude, "de force ob de tide will cause a stick ob wood to go wid de tide, which am called de lars ob grabitation."

"What do you mean? Did you see a canoe?"

"Not 'zactly dat. I see'd it, and den ag'in I didn't see it."

"You confounded little nigger!" cried Tom, grasping him by the shirt-collar and shaking him. "Out with it; explain yourself. See it and didn't see it—what are you driving at?"

"Well, den, I sees dat canoe in de fus' place, but I didn't see dat canoe af'erwards, for de reason dat it sail away and dat I t'row myself down."

"So all this time you knew that an Indian had carried Miss Lormer off in a canoe?"

"Oh, yes; I knowed dat."

"And why did you keep it from me? Again, why didn't you try to rescue the girl?"

"Dar's jes' how it am! I didn't like to speak ob it, from de fear dat you would t'ink I ougher try to sabe missus. But I had no arms—dat's de whole truf ob de matter!"

"What do you call those?" said Tom, point-

ing to the two huge horse-pistols and a long knife which Jumble carried in his belt.

"Ebberyt'ing in dis yere worl' goes by comparison," answered the black boy. "Dat Injun hab rifle and tomerhawk, and 'longside ob dem t'ings, I hab no arms!"

"What a little muff!" cried Tom. "Well, come on! You have legs, at any rate, and can use them fast enough."

CHAPTER V.

JUMBLE'S DANCE.

TOM and the negro boy moved rapidly along the bank of the stream.

They had proceeded about a quarter of a mile when they came to a place where many rocks, projecting above the surface of the water, would have prevented a canoe from going further. By being dragged over these rocks to the clear water beyond, however, the voyager could continue on his course.

Certain prints of moccasins on the soft ground of the bank indicated that the Indian and his captive had quitted the vessel at this point and moved off toward the mountains.

"We ought to see the canoe here," said Tom.

"Look for it, nig."

"I hab seen enuff ob it," answered Jumble.

"Look for it, I say," repeated Tom, sternly.

Jumble and his companion searched for the light craft, which they soon found in a small cove, concealed by shrubbery.

"Now that we know where the canoe is, we will follow the trail," said Tom, as he crossed by the rocks in the stream to the other side.

Just as he reached the opposite bank he was startled by two thundering reports behind him. He turned to see Jumble holding his pistols pointed toward the canoe, at which his shots had just been fired.

"You little fool! Why did you fire?"

Jumble bravely flourished his pistols.

"Dat canoe hab been de cause ob all our trouble," he cried. "Dat canoe carried off missus! Dat canoe am a rascal!—a scamp ob de worse inscription, for treatin' de missus dat way! Dat's why I fire at de canoe!"

As he spoke he thrust his pistols back in his belt, with the air of a hero, and crossed over to Tom's side.

"Don't you fire again until I tell you to," said the youth. "You have probably spoiled everything by these shots. If there are Indians near enough they must have heard the noise."

Moving on, the two finally reached the summit of the cliff from which they obtained a view of a wooded valley in the distance. From among the trees rose a column of smoke.

"The Indians are there, I'll be sworn," said Tom. "Now, then, we must be careful. We must contrive to rescue Miss Lormer before night."

"I would ask if you are goin't to try to 'teal a march on dem Injuns?"

"Of course, and we must have our arms ready. You better reload your pistols."

Jumble's teeth began to chatter. The whites of his eyes rolled wildly, and his lips turned pale. He drew one of the pistols and commenc-

ed to ram into it an old red and yellow handkerchief.

"What are you about?" said Tom. "Don't you know what you are doing? See what you are putting into your pistol!"

Jumble held the pistol before him and stared at it. Then he fastened his teeth in the end of the handkerchief and proceeded to pull it out.

"Here, give me the pistols," said Tom, observing that the negro's hand and arm shook as if he had the ague.

He loaded the pistols from Jumble's ammunition-pouch, and thrust them back into the boy's belt.

"Come on," he said.

Jumble reluctantly followed Tom down the sloping precipice. Shaking like a leaf, he kept close to him, holding one of his great pistols tightly.

The boys were within a hundred yards of the valley, when, by peering through a cleft in a rock, they could see Minnie Lormer, bound to a tree, with half a dozen savages seated near her.

"There are some bushes between us and the valley," said Tom. "We will creep up close to the tree back of which you can see there extends a line of shrubbery. Once in that shrubbery, we can reach the tree, and as the savages are sitting with their backs to it, I can cut the thongs holding the girl, and creep off with her. You must be ready with your pistols to take good aim and fire from the shrubbery at the Indians, the moment they discover the girl's escape. Do you twig?"

"It am perfec'ly plain," gasped the frightened darky, "and de commands ob de enemy—I mean de command ob de general, or radder *yours*, shall be peromtoly fulfilled."

"There is where you are to post yourself," said Tom, indicating a thick clump of bushes on a knoll a little to the right of those behind the tree.

"Dere's whar I's to be a post," repeated Jumble, in a whisper to himself.

"And," continued Tom, "you are not to fire until the Indians perceive that the girl is gone, and start in pursuit."

"I's not to be fired at when dem Injuns starts in pursuit ob de girl instead ob me," again repeated Jumble.

"Don't you fire untill sure you will hit."

"Be shuah dey don't fire so as to hit dis chile," murmured Jumble.

When the latter gained the position pointed out to him, he shook so that Tom feared the savages might hear the rustling he made in the bushes.

The boy crept cautiously along toward the tree to which Minnie was bound.

When close to it, he rose and whispered in the girl's ear: "Don't act as if you hear me. The moment I cut your thongs, stoop cautiously and creep along with me through the shrubbery."

Although somewhat startled by the sudden address, yet Minnie made no noise.

Drawing his knife Tom severed her bonds, and the girl crouching, crept along with her rescuer through the shrubbery. Evidently her escape would for some time have remained un-

discovered but for Jumble. The darky, trembling in every limb, as he stooped among the bushes on the knoll, saw the shadow of one of the Indians sway suddenly as he made a slight movement. Imagining, in his terror, that the savage was coming toward him, the boy raised his pistol and fired at random, the bullet passing high over the heads of the party by the fire.

In an instant the red-men sprung to their feet, and while two of them bounded toward the knoll, the others noticing the escape of the girl, darted into the shrubbery, in search of her.

With an unearthly yell, Jumble, throwing away his pistol, leaped from the bushes and ran.

"Black-face, stop, or me fire!" cried the foremost Indian, who was within a few yards of the fugitive.

"Oh! Lord! Oh, Goll-a-mighty, help dis little nig!" screamed the "darky," throwing himself upon his back, his legs and arms sawing the air like a windmill. "Oh, massa Injun, I didn't fire dat pis'l, it went off ob itself, and I aim it straight in de air, when I pulled de trigger!"

"Fool, get up!" said the Indian, as he now looked down at the boy.

"Yes! yes! any'ting in de worl' if you spar' Jumble's life. I never had any grudge ag'in' yer, and dat's de livin' truf!"

He arose, to face both savages who had been in pursuit of him.

One of them caught him by the ear, and with grim playfulness made a circle about his woolly head with his tomahawk.

"Ugh!" he grunted, "tired of *white* scalp! like black scalps for change!"

"Dey's no good! dey's no good! shuah as yer born!" gasped Jumble, clasping his hands, "dat black scalp is not worf a pin!"

"Good for give to squaw; squaw show to baby. Make baby laugh."

"On de contrary, sah, dah black scalp would frighten de little one out ob his nateral life, and de wool would come off and 'tick in his eyes!"

One of the Indians snatched the string of pearls from the speaker's neck.

He looked at them admiringly.

"If let black boy go, will he bring more?"

"Oh, de Lord bless yer, yes! I know whar dar's a hull bushel ob dem pearls. I'll bring more ob *dem*, and half a dozen gol' rings, and ebber so many chiny cups and saucers, and all sorts ob little chiny imerges, and little dolls, wid heads dat go roun' and roun'."

"Lie!" briefly answered the savage.

Then looking steadily at the "darky," with eyes that gleamed like fire from under his hideous head-dress, he said:

"What make black boy have heart like a squaw?"

"Oh, golly, sah!" faltered Jumble, "de heart's in de right place, but I's fond ob de wool on my head, bekase it keeps my head warm in de winter time, and bekase dar's so many brack girls dat wants a lock ob my h'ar."

"Ugh! black girl have strong stomach," grunted the savage. "Come, we show what we do with the black-face."

"Help! help!" screamed Jumble, as the Indian collared him and dragged him toward the fire.

"Roast legs with fire. Want to see the boy kick," said the fierce captor.

"Goll-a-mighty!" yelled Jumble, "whatsom-ebber yer do, spar' de shins ob dis chile! Dey's de most tenderloin part ob de human body!"

Heedless of his supplications, the two Crows tied him to a stake with a rope so long that it would give freedom to his movements, and then they rolled up his trowsers, baring his legs to the knees.

The terror of the "darky" was at its height, when one of the savages pulled a burning brand from the fire and approached him.

The Crows had evidently heard of the reported tenderness of a negro's shins. With the end of the brand the Indian touched that part of Jumble's leg causing him to hop and dance about in a grotesque manner, while he filled the air with his yells.

In reality he was more frightened than hurt, for the Indian touched him only once with the lighted end of the stick, causing no more pain than might have been made by the prick of a pin. After that the savage amused himself by applying to the captive's "shins" that end of the brand which had no fire upon it!

So great was the force of Jumble's imagination, however, that he danced, leaped, sprung and yelled, under the impression that he was suffering excruciating pain!

CHAPTER VI.

JUMBLE'S FORTUNE.

MINNIE and her companion, the moment they heard the report of the pistol, knew that the Indians would be in pursuit of them.

They quickened their pace, and gained a ledge behind which Tom now paused.

The three savages chasing them had caught sight of their forms, and were coming on, one holding a rifle ready for a shot and the two others grasping long spears.

The boy pointed his piece toward the three and fired, when the one with the rifle dropped his weapon, his right arm having been struck by the bullet.

"I've winged one of the varmints," said Tom, "and that'll keep the others from coming up in a hurry."

The Indians did not emerge from behind a mound where they were now sheltered. They were evidently awaiting the darkness of night to conceal their advance.

Meanwhile the ear-splitting yells of Jumble were heard in the distance.

"Poor Jum," murmured Minnie, with tears in her eyes, "it is terrible to hear him. They are torturing him, I am afraid."

"I will go and see what I can do for him," said Tom, as soon as it is dark enough.

"You can do nothing. There are too many of them. Oh! I am so sorry for Jum!"

"I'll never leave a friend in the lurch, whether he be black or white!" said Tom.

"Sometimes there is no help for it."

"There are only two Indians, tormenting the 'darky,'" responded the boy, looking toward

the fire. "They seem to be touching or pricking him with something, as well as I can see."

"Barbarous! dreadful!" murmured the girl, shuddering.

As the twilight shadows deepened, Tom took Minnie's arm, and hurried with her among rocks and bushes which would hide the two from their foes, toward the stream.

The lad had tied a kerchief about his head, and on the ledge he had left, he had placed his cap, so as to give the watchful savages the impression that he was still there. The deception was successful, and the fugitives reached the stream without being pursued. Tom, having dragged the canoe over the rocky obstructions in its way, fastened the warp to a rugged projection, and helped the girl into the vessel.

"Now, then," he said, "Wait here for me to come back. I am going to try to rescue Jumble. If you should see Indians coming, untie the canoe-rope, and let the craft drift downstream."

"You are a brave boy," said Minnie, admiringly. "But I am afraid you are too reckless."

"You'll soon see me coming back with Jumble," answered Tom, as he hurried away.

Cautiously but swiftly he moved in the direction of the fire, which he now could see twinkling like a red eye in the gloom.

Jumble was still yelling, but when he was near enough to see him by the lurid gleam, the boy noticed that his position had been changed.

The savages had made a second fire under the tree, and from a branch, with the rope about his middle, they had suspended the darky, who, although the heat hardly scorched him, exaggerated, as usual, the horror of his situation. In fact he squirmed, twisted himself, and now and then turned a somerset in the air, greatly to the amusement of the two young Indians, who, however, squatted on their hams, under the tree, smoking pipes, coolly and gravely watched the spectacle.

As these savages were armed only with spears and tomahawks, the boy had no doubt that he would succeed in rescuing his black friend. The Indians, in spite of his caution, heard the rustling he made in the bushes, and, springing up, they saw him as he aimed his rifle toward them.

"Get away from there, you varmints!" cried Tom, "or you are dead dogs!"

The two Crows, with a yell of rage, darted off behind a rock, some distance from the fire.

The boy then advanced to the tree on which Jumble was suspended.

"Oh, Massa Tom!" cried the darky. "I's killed suah! Dar's no life lef' in me. Dis poor nig am as dead as a stone!"

"Not quite as bad as that," replied the youth below. "If I throw you my knife, do you think you can catch it?"

"I's cotched enough, already," said Jumble. "I's too dead to catch anyting more."

"It is the only way you can be saved," replied Tom. "Here! hold out your hands, and catch the knife!"

The black boy extended his arms, and Tom threw the knife.

The "darky" was so afraid that it would

stick him, that, instead of seizing it, he struck at it wildly, hitting it a blow which sent it downward, so that it passed through one leg of his pants, pricking his "shin."

The yell which then escaped him might have been heard for a mile.

"Oh! oh! golly how dat hurt! Dat shin hab been burned to def, already, and dis am de wuss of it all!"

"Reach down and pull the knife out of your pants," said Tom. "Quick! there is no time to lose!"

Jumble obeyed.

"Now cut the rope!" added Tom, as he kicked away the burning brands of the fire.

Jumble did so, and down he came a distance of eight feet, landing upon his posteriors, among the remains of the fire.

"I's burned up suah, now! Hoo-ah! Oh! ah! Help! help!" yelled the little negro, rolling over and over upon the ground, rubbing and slapping his seat.

"Get up, you are not hurt at all!" said Tom, as he took hold of Jumble's hand, and pulled him to his feet. "Now, then, follow me."

The lad directed his course toward the stream, but he had not proceeded far when he saw dark outlines of human forms approaching.

"We's dead now, shuah!" said Jumble. "Heah dey come—dem debbils in de shape ob Injuns!"

"Hist! keep as silent as if you *were* dead," said Tom. "We will creep in here and they may pass without seeing us."

As he spoke he crawled, followed by his companion, into the opening of a rock, above which hung a large boulder.

The two remained silent and motionless in the cave, and soon they heard the Indians go past.

All at once, just as Tom was about to creep out of the cavern, he saw the face evidently of a small Indian boy, peering into the hollow.

It was so dark there that the presence of the fugitives would not have been made known to the little savage, had not Jumble given utterance to a yell of dismay.

"You have spoiled all!" cried Tom.

As he spoke the Indian boy's face disappeared from the opening, and, the next moment, down came the boulder with a crash over the entrance.

"We are fixed now," continued Tom, much chagrined. "That boy has penned us up here with the boulder, and has gone to call the other savages, and bring them here."

Jumble commenced to howl and groan.

"Pack that," cried Tom, "you have done mischief enough already."

"P'raps dar may be some odder way fur git-tin' out ob dis black hole ob 'Calcuttah,'" said Jumble. "I t'ink I sees an openin' up dar," he added, pointing slantingly upward.

"There is a hole, sure enough," answered Tom, "but whether or not it is big enough for us to get through it, remains to be seen."

The "darker" instantly commenced to crawl up a ledge leading to the hole, but he had not reached it when, with a howl of terror, he came rolling back down the rocky shelf.

"May de good Lord hab marcy on dis poor nig!" he cried. "De debbil himself, or some

one ob dat happy famerly, hab got hold ob him now!"

In fact, Tom could bear smothered squealing, mingling with the negro's cries, but whence it came he was puzzled to tell, as he could see nothing.

"Where is it? What is it?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, sah, dat's it! dat's it! It am de 'what is it,' and it am got de teef fas' in dis darky's hidel! Oh! help! help! fur de Lord's sake!"

And, as he spoke, Jumble continued to roll over and over, now and then grasping the legs of his companion.

Tom lighted a match and by the gleam he saw the long tail of some animal protruding from the negro's pants' pocket, upon which the terrified black tightly pressed one of his hands.

"Take away your hand," said the youth, as he seized the tail in a firm grip, "and I'll pull it out!"

Jumble obeyed, and Tom drew from the "darker's" pocket a *muskrat*, which, it was plain, had got into its present quarters by accident, and from sheer fright.

The boy let the creature go, and it scampered off, evidently overjoyed at regaining its freedom.

"There, Jumble, you see what a fool you've made of yourself. That animal would not have hurt a flea."

"Well, de fac' am," said the black boy, who seemed a little ashamed of his terror, "dat dar's times when de bravest ob de brave may be overcome by not knowin' de why and de wharfore ob anyt'ing sudden dat happens."

"Well, now go and see if you can get through that hole. It may be large enough for *you*, but I don't think it is for *me*."

Jumble crept up to the hole and by dint of hard squeezing, succeeded in getting out.

Tom who had also reached the aperture, found that it was impossible to force his stouter body through.

"Get a stone and pound at the edges of the hole," he said to the negro, "and I think you can make it large enough for me to squeeze through it."

"Dem Injuns am comin'," answered the "darker." "T'ink de bes' t'ing dis nig can do, considerin' de criticality ob de 'casion, am to go look somewhar fur an ax or a hammer."

"No, no," said Tom, "with a stone you can quickly make the opening larger."

But there was no response.

Jumble had run off.

CHAPTER VII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

JUMBLE hurried away with headlong speed. Now and then in the dark he would stumble and fall, but he would pick himself up and keep on, scrambling up the sides of the rocks, scraping his shins, and yelling when he did so, but still keeping on.

In a short time he found himself at the crossing-place, on the bank of the stream.

"Is that you?" inquired a gentle voice.

"Oh! Lor' bress yer, yes; it am dis nig at last, come fur to rescue yer from all yer trou-

bles and perils!" cried Jumble, who had recognized the voice of his mistress.

As he spoke he sprung into the canoe.

"Where is Tom?" inquired the girl, anxiously.

"Oh, it am all right!" answered the "darker," as, with the knife Tom had given him, he severed the warp holding the canoe.

"Why did you do that?" cried the young girl in alarm. "We should have waited for the boy."

"It am all right," repeated Jumble.

"But where is he?—where is Tom?" said Minnie. "We are now drifting fast away from the place where I was to have waited for him."

"Oh, it am all right!" said Jumble again.

And as he spoke the whites of his eyes rolled and glistened through the darkness.

"Come, tell me where he is! Where and how did you leave him?" said Minnie.

"Well, you see dar's Injuns a-comin' fur to scalp dat white boy, and if dis nig hadn't made off, quicker'n a 'possum, dey would have scalped him, too; but it's all right, anyhow!"

"It seems to me it's all *wrong*! So you left that brave boy in the lurch?"

"I lef' him in de hollow ob a rock, whar de Injuns is goin', and whar de probabilitum is dat he'll be scalped if he don't git away from dar. But, as de sayin' am, whar dar's life dar's hope, and it am always de darkest before day."

"Can you not work the canoe back? We must return."

"I can nebber work ag'in' dat current, missus. If we keep straight on we may see some white folks somewhar, and send dem to help dat boy."

"Will we be apt to see any?"

"Dar's nuffin' like tryin'."

Meanwhile the canoe, kept steady by the negro, who held one of the paddles astern, glided rapidly on. The moon, which had previously been hidden by clouds, was now visible, as the sky cleared and the silvery light fell upon the waters of the stream.

Finally, rocks were seen ahead, which would prevent the further progress of the light vessel.

The darker worked the canoe alongside of the bank.

"We mus' git out heah, missus," he said. "I know dis country well. Dar's a settlement 'bout twenty miles from heah, and dar's whar we mus' go."

"Let us make all haste," said Minnie. "We will probably find some white people there to send to Tom's rescue."

"I don't t'ink we can reach dat settlement to-night, missus. Dar's so many rocks and woods in de way dat it would be onposserble. Probable dat boy will keep un il mornin'."

"Alas! I am afraid it is too late already," said the girl.

The two moved on, Jumble leading the way.

At length they came to a cliff, which must be crossed on their way to the settlement, but which it would be impossible to ascend in the dim light.

Jumble found a snug alcove in a rock, and there, with leaves and branches, he made a resting-place for Minnie.

"Dar, now, you kin go to sleep, while dis nig

keeps guard," said the "darker," drawing his remaining pistol, which the Crows had not taken from him. "Res' assuah, missus, dat I'll protec' yer wid my bery life, as become de bravest ob scouts!"

So saying, he moved off a few yards from the alcove which Minnie had entered, and commenced to walk up and down, taking slow, dignified strides, and carrying the huge horse-pistol on his left shoulder.

At length, however, he became drowsy, and crawling into a crevice among the rocks, he dropped to sleep.

He was awakened at dawn by voices, and the tramp of approaching feet.

"Injuns! Injuns!" he yelled. "Wake up, missus, and fly fur yer life!"

He sprung up, as he spoke, and ran at a headlong pace.

The approaching footsteps seemed to gain upon him. He crouched in the hollow of a rock, trembling in every limb, while he repeatedly rubbed his woolly head as if to make sure that it was still in its place.

At that instant he felt a strong hand on the skirt of his jacket, and he was pulled backward with a force which made his teeth rattle.

Down he went, into a sort of pit, bumping his nose on the ground, while in the dim light he saw a figure before him, cloing with a heap of brush the opening through which he had been jerked into this retreat.

Rolling over and over, the negro split the air with his yells of terror.

"I's los' now, shuah! I's mos' broke my nose! Oh! oh! Hoo-ool hoo—"

"Stop your noise, you black fool!" came the stern, low voice of the person who had drawn him into the pit. "You are safe enough here!"

At these words Jumble looked up, to see, by the light which stole down into the rocky pit through an opening in the rugged ceiling above, a sturdy, middle-aged man, every part of whose face, except the eyes, was concealed by a thick, bushy beard. He wore a hunting-shirt of buckskin, leggings and moccasins. In a broad belt about his waist was a long knife, and his rifle stood against the wall.

"Praise de Lord!" cried Jumble. "So you's a friend to dis poor nig?"

"I will not hurt you, but don't you say a word at present. You kin stay hyar fur awhile, ef you behave yourself."

"I's still as a mouse," said the "darker," as he crouched upon his hams.

Footsteps and voices now were heard outside. It was evident the party Jumble had heard were searching for some one.

At length the noises receded. The hunter—for such he appeared to be—withdrew the brush from the opening, and going out, took a long survey of the country.

In the distance, yelling, shooting like wild Indians, he beheld a gang of a dozen fierce boys, from fifteen to eighteen, clad in hunter's garb, and heavily armed with pistols, rifles and knives.

"Thar they go—the Lynch-gang 'Wolves!'" he muttered, bitterly, as he quickly drew back, and entered the pit. "Now, then, darker, tell me what's the matter with you? Why were

you hiding! Were you afraid o' them white people?"

"I t'ought dey was Injuns," answered the negro.

Then he went on to describe his late adventures, making it appear, however, that he had shown the most heroic courage, from first to last.

"You say you left your white-boy friend shut up in a hollow," remarked his listener. "What was the name of that boy, besides Tom?"

"His odder name was Tabor, sah, and he was de son ob dat fellah what killed de sheriff. Will yer please tell me *your* name, dat dis nig may know what to call yer?"

"Well, then," said the man, hesitatingly, "it is Will Haskins!"

He had given a sudden start on hearing the name of the boy who had been left behind in such peril.

"Could you lead me to the place where your friend is?" he inquired, seizing his rifle.

"I could, marsa; dat is if yer give dis nig sumfin' to eat, for I's half famished wid 'tarvation."

From the wallet he had just slung at his side, the hunter took some pieces of venison and some bread, which he tossed to the negro.

The latter devoured the food greedily, after which Haskins led the way out of the retreat.

"Yer won't forgit missus, on de way?" said Jumble. "I don't know what's become ob dat brave young lady."

"No, I will not be likely to forget *her*," said the hunter, with a strong emphasis on the last word.

Jumble, who, as already stated, knew this part of the country well, now went ahead, but, on reaching the place where he had left Minnie, he found that she was gone.

"She will probably find her way to the settlement," said Haskins. "Go on! Streak it, darky, like white lightnin'."

About an hour later, the two gained the crossing-place of the stream, and, finally, they reached the hollow, which Jumble at once recognized by an old dead tree near it. The boulder had been removed from the opening, and Tom was gone.

"They've captured that boy," said Haskins, anxiously, as he looked at certain footprints on the ground.

"Dat's too bad," said Jumble, scratching his head. "He was al'nos' as brave as dis nig, and fur dat reason I'm mou'ty sorry he hab los' his h'ar."

"We do not know that he has lost his h'ar," said Haskins. "We must hunt fur him. Thar's hope, yet!"

The man spoke in an anxious voice.

Following the trail, the two finally came in sight of a wooded slope, upon which were seated half a dozen of the Crow tribe.

Jumble's teeth began to chatter.

"No sign of him, thar!" said Haskins, gloomily. "I'm afraid the varmints hev done ther work! Ef they hev, by the 'tarnal! I'll be revenged!"

"What's yer goin' to do?" inquired the black boy.

As he spoke, the gaze of the hunter fell upon

an Indian lad, who was passing the ridge of rock behind which the two stood, but who did not see them, on account of a clump of bushes on their right.

Haskins pounced upon the boy, holding him by the throat with one hand, while in the other, he grasped his long knife.

"No noise, or you're a dead coon," he said. "Whar's the white boy you captured last night? Tell me, or I'll cut off your head."

"Yes, sah," said Jumble, now boldly advancing, and shaking his horse-pistol in the face of the defenseless boy, who had not even a knife in his belt, "and after yer head comes off, I'll pound yer skull wid dat yere pis'll! D'yer beah!—say!"

And the negro glared fiercely at the lad, gritting his teeth and showing the whites of his rolling eyes.

"Ugh!" grunted the young Indian, contemptuously, turning his back upon the "darky." "Logo is a Crow. He is not afraid to die. Let the white hunter ask a man of his own size, if he wants to know. The Crow braves are not far off."

As he spoke, the lad, with a sudden nimble twist of his body, loosened himself from the grasp of Haskins, and kicked Jumble who was in his way, on one of his "shins," and, in a moment, was out of sight, gliding like an eel among the rocks.

The "darky" dropped down in a "heap," yelling with pain, while he pressed both hands upon his "shin."

"Hist! you coward!" said Haskins, sternly. "Pack that at once!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAPTURE.

AFTER Jumble left him, Tom endeavored to enlarge the opening above him by striking it with the butt of his piece.

He had made it nearly large enough to admit his body, when he heard the Indians at the boulder over the entrance, trying to move it.

He redoubled his efforts; but ere he could make the hole much larger the savages came into the cave.

Tom then faced round, and looking down upon their hideous faces, revealed by the light of a torch which one of them carried, he pointed his piece toward them.

"Keep back therel!" he cried. "The first one who tries to come up that ledge gets a bullet in his head!"

The boy, partly sheltered by an abutment of the rock, could not be hit by the rifles or spears of the savages.

"Come down. Injun no want to hurt. Injun want make little black-face bring more pearls!" cried one of the Crows—a stout man whose leggings seemed much too small for him, and who had a large, rugged face, with a long, hooked nose and glittering eyes.

"Get out! You cannot fool me that way," said the lad.

"Pale-face too smart!" grunted the savage. "Better come down. What use of being shut up here?"

Tom did not change his position, but still held his piece pointed toward the opening.

All at once, to his surprise, he saw it flying upward from his grasp.

A strong savage had knelt down by the hole above, and suddenly thrusting both arms through it, had jerked the weapon from his hand.

So sudden had the movement been performed that Tom had had no time to tighten his grasp upon the piece.

"What a fool I've been!" muttered the boy, as he now darted down the ledge toward the opening. As he sprung through it he was confronted by several of the Crows, who made him prisoner. He was led off to the same valley where Jumble had been made to perform his antics. There he was bound with thongs to the tree from which he had freed Minnie.

"What are you going to do with me?" inquired the lad, as the savages now quietly seated themselves upon the ground.

"The white boy will know in time."

"You better let me go. I have never harmed you."

"Shoot one Crow dead, and shoot another in arm."

"I did not shoot the one who was killed, answered the lad.

"All same. The white boy can lie. All the pale faces double-tongue."

Then rising, he thrust the point of his knife a little beneath the skin over the lad's heart.

"Oh! oh! oh! how it hurts!" yelled Tom.

"Make hurt more. The white boy is a squaw. He cries when he has pain. Not so the Crow. He can bear pain, and be as still as the panther when he is going to spring."

As he spoke the speaker again pricked the boy with the point of his blade.

"See if you will be still after that, you mean varmint!" cried Tom, suddenly dealing the savage, between the eyes, a blow with his clinched fist, which knocked him down, half-stunned, upon his companions.

Then away he went, making for the thicket which was on his right.

Some moments elapsed ere the Indians were sufficiently recovered from their confusion to start in pursuit, by which time Tom had proceeded about a hundred yards.

The crack of a rifle and the whizzing of bullets about his ears showed him that his foes had commenced the chase.

"I'm all right, so far," muttered the lad, as he crept into a hollow tree, which he saw before him by the dim light of the moon, now stealing down among the branches. "It was a good move of mine, pretending that I was frightened while I was cutting my thongs with the clasp knife, which I had taken from the concealed pocket of my jacket. I'm sorry I dropped the knife, as it might have come in use."

Remaining in the hollow, Tom soon heard the Indians who were hunting for him go running past.

As soon as he could no longer hear them, he directed his course toward the stream, which he reached half an hour later.

To his surprise, he found that the canoe was no longer there.

"The warp must somehow have got loose from the rock to which it was fastened," he thought. "That girl was not the one to go off of her own accord, after she had promised to wait for me."

He kept along the bank of the stream, but he did not discover the cause, until he had reached the place where it could be navigated no further, when he saw it fast among the rocks.

"The girl must have got out on the bank, here," he muttered.

He looked closely at the ground, and was able to make out the prints, upon the soft earth, left by Minnie's and the negro's feet.

In the dim light he soon lost the trail, and, finally, he paused to rest among a group of rocks. Here, before he was aware of it, he dropped to sleep.

He was awakened at dawn by a girl's shriek. He rubbed his eyes and looked about him in confusion, until he again heard that cry of distress, when he imagined he recognized the voice as that of Minnie Lohmer.

"Where can she be?" he muttered, and then, springing to his feet, he hurried in the direction of the cries, which continued.

He had not proceeded far, scrambling over rocks and through bushes, when he came in sight of Minnie, whose position certainly was one of great peril.

The girl was hanging by a vine on the side of a precipice, fifty feet high, while above her, lashing its tail, while its eyes gleamed with fury, was a large wild-cat, which, moving to and fro on the edge of the height, seemed undecided whether to spring upon the young woman, or wait until she should let go of the vine and drop to the base of the elevation, before attacking her!

Tom deeply regretted that his rifle had been taken from him by the Indians.

However, he had with him a loaded pistol, with two barrels, which, in an inside pocket of his jacket, had not been noticed by his captors.

As they had possessed themselves of his ammunition, it was not in his power to fire more than two shots at the savage beast.

Desiring, therefore, to make these effective ones, he ran round to the other side of the rock, and got close to the wild-cat ere he fired.

The beast dropped dying at the second shot, the blood pouring from a wound in its breast.

"I've 'settled' him!" cried Tom; "and now let me see what I can do for Minnie."

On reaching the edge of the rock he saw the young girl still clinging to the vine.

There were some roots by means of which he thought he might descend to her, as she was only about five feet below the top of the elevation.

He made the trial, and gained her side.

"Now then, put your arms around me, and hang on to me, while I scramble up with you," he said.

She complied with his request, and Tom, slowly and steadily, drew himself to the summit of the elevation.

Minnie blushed as she let go her preserver and stepped upon the rock.

"A second time you have saved my life," she said. "You are indeed a brave boy!"

"Oh! don't you say a word," he answered. "What boy wouldn't have done the same for you?"

"Jumble," she answered, smiling.

"I can believe that," said Tom. "Was he not with you in the canoe?"

"Yes, he was; and he ran off again last night and left me in the lurch. There were some people coming, and he thought they were Indians; but I could tell by their voices as they passed, without seeing me, that they were whites. They were the fierce Lynch-law 'Wolves,' but I tried to make them hear me, for I wanted to get them to go to your assistance—Jumble having told me that he had left you in peril from the savages."

"And so he did—the mean little nigger!"

"Well, he came to the canoe, and before I could prevent him he cut the warp, setting the vessel adrift. As I just said, I tried to make those white boys hear me, but they made so much noise themselves that I was unable to, and finally they were too far off for me to call to them."

Further explanations were made.

"The wild-cat sprung toward me from a hollow just as I reached the top of the rock," continued the girl. "I ran to the edge and let myself down, and as the creature came on I dropped, but contrived to clutch the vine."

"We must now try to reach some settlement," said Tom. "I am hungry, and I suppose you must be half-famished."

CHAPTER IX.

JUMBLE'S RETREAT.

AFTER the Indian boy had escaped from him, Haskins watching, finally saw him hurry toward the Crows in the distance, whom, he soon joined.

"Now, then, little nigger, thar'll be work for us," he said. "Hyar they come, them varmints, making for us!"

"What mu' I do? Tell me, and I will do de berry bes' I can!" said Jumble, with chattering teeth.

"No, they have turned and are going in another direction," said Haskins.

On hearing this the "darks" all of a sudden regained his lost courage.

Flourishing his pistol, he cried in a loud voice:

"Git out dar, yer yaller niggers! Ef yer comes dis way again I'll fix yer—yes I will—snub as you're born!"

"Save yer wind, darky; they kin not hear you!"

"I on'ly wish they'd come dis way! Wouldn't I 'socket' it to 'em; I's little, but I ain't to be trod on, nohow!"

"You may have your wish," said Haskins. "The varmints are trying to sarcumvent us—to git round in our rear!"

"Is dat so?" cried Jumble, drawing a long breath. "Den we ought to be prepared. We ought to go de odder way!"

"That is just what we oughtn't do, ef you please! Thar's not a better persition than this, anywhar 'bout these diggings!"

"S'posin' I go ahead and look if I can find a

good place fur to make a stan'?" said Jumble, rolling his eyes.

"No, no, you'll stand hyar!" cried Haskins, "and ef they come upon us, front and rear, you kin let 'em have it with your pistol, while I use my rifl-!"

"But—but," stammered Jumble. "I's 'fraid I mou't fire crooked! De fac' am, dat dar's times when I has a squint in de lef' eye!"

And as he spoke, he twisted the eye far up under his brow.

"Nonsense!" said the hunter. "Ef thar was a nice juicy piece o' biffer meat before you you'd see straight enough."

"I's goin' to take a look out, anyway," cried the 'darks,' as he scrambled over the ledge and sprung among the rocks, ere the hunter could prevent him.

"Come back hyar!" he shouted, but Jumble kept on, paying no heed to the summons, and soon he was far from the ledge, speeding on among the rocks.

Haskins gave a contemptuous grunt.

"After all, it is good riddance," he muttered. "The cowardly little nigger would hev only been in the way, had he staid with me."

As he had thought would be the case, some of the Crows soon appeared coming up in the rear, while the others crawled round among the rocks in front.

The hunter took aim with his piece at those behind him, and his first shot laid one of his enemies low.

The bullets of his foes now whizzed about his head, but he coolly continued to load and fire.

The Indians, however, gradually creeping toward him, screened by rocks, must soon have captured him, but for the appearance, in the distance, of an approaching party of whites.

The moment the savages caught sight of these people, they bent a hasty retreat, while Haskins, crouching behind the ledge, watched the coming band with keen interest, evidently, with no satisfaction, recognizing the fierce Lynch-law Gang, with Trapper John at their head. As they drew nearer, he crept down the elevation, keeping himself screened by the rocks, and made off as rapidly as he could go, taking a direction which led him toward the stream. As yet the whites had not seen him, and he seemed very anxious to escape their attention, taking advantage of every rock and clump of shrubbery which would screen him from their observation.

At last he reached the stream, and, crossing it, he hurried rapidly along its banks, in the direction of his retreat. At this moment he heard a shout far behind him, and knew that he was seen. On the summit of a cliff stood a boy looking toward him.

"It's that confounded Trapper John," he muttered.

Keeping on, he finally turned off into the thicket, and at length reached a marshy field.

Tufts of dry ground, here and there, enabled him to gain the center of it, where, among a clump of bushes, he paused, crouching very low.

Not long after he heard the voices of the Lynch-gang "Wolves," as, with Trapper John

still at their head, they went rushing past the swamp.

Waiting until they were out of sight, Haskins emerged from his covert, and continued his way.

All at once he paused on seeing the body of the wild-cat, which had been shot by Tom Tabor. Then he looked carefully at the ground by the base of the rock.

"A girl and a boy hev passed this way," he muttered. "I must find out who that boy is," he added, his visage lighting up.

Moving on, he was passing a hill upon which lay several logs, when he beheld a singular spectacle.

One of the logs, detaching itself from the others, came rolling swiftly toward him.

"Oh, goll-a-mighty! oh! oh! I's goin' to die for shuah, now," came the voice of Jumble from the interior of the log. "Dar's a couple ob honey-bees fas'ened darselves to my shins, and de Lord on'y knows whar dis log am a-takin' me to!"

"You've comfortable quarters thar, nigger!" cried Haskins. "The log 'll stop 'fore long, in the pond which are at the foot of the hill. That 'll pay ye fur leaving me in the lurch!"

Kicking his feet, which protruded from the log, in vain efforts to stop the rolling piece of timber, Jumble called out:

"I didn't leabe yer, 'cept to go for assistance. I was gwine to bring dis log along fur a breas'-work—dat was all!"

On came the log. Haskins might easily have stopped it, but he stepped aside, and allowed it to roll into the pond.

There was a horrible gurgling sound from the "darky," and, knowing that now he really was in peril, Haskins seized the timber and pulled it back upon the shore.

"No use! I's gone now! I's drowned! dead drowned! and dar's an end to dis nig!" screamed Jumble, wildly kicking his protruding feet and ankles.

"I'll pull yer out, nigger—you're all right," said Haskins.

He seized the boy by his ankles, and tugged in vain, while the "darky" called upon him to stop pulling.

"As thar's no other way to git you out, I'll hev to cut the log with an ax," said Haskins.

"Dat would finish me, marsa. Don't use de ax, for ob course you'd split my head as well as de log!"

"I reckon not, if I'm car'ful. I know whar thar's an ax."

The hunter procured a sharp stone, which he placed in a crevice of the log for a wedge. Then obtaining a hard piece of wood, which would serve for a club, he commenced to pound upon the stone.

Thinking Haskins was using an ax, Jumble yelled with terror, beseeching him to desist.

"I feels de edge ob dat ax in my body, already!" he cried. "Oh, marsa! I begs ob you to stop using dat 'impelment' ob destruction! Dar, now, it am cutting into my body, fudder and fudder, and I knows dat half ob my ribs am cut away already!"

At length, with one tremendous blow, the hunter split open the log, and Jumble crawled

out, hopping to his feet, and staring at the stone which had served for a wedge.

"I could ob sworn it was an ax," he said.

"Thar it is," said Haskins, smiling. "You kin see by that what fright 'll do."

"Sahl!" said Jumble, drawing himself up, "I don't know de name ob fear! It was not de fear ob de ax hurtin' me, so much as dat I was afraid de ax itself might suffer from de concussion."

"Well, come on. I am trying to follow up the tracks here on the ground."

"Ef one ob dem tracks ain't de print of Miss Lormer's heel, den I don't know de meanin' ob heels!"

"You know how to use your own."

At that instant, only a short distance off, he heard the yells of savages, followed by the crack of several rifles.

Jumble turned, but the hunter caught him firmly by the collar.

"No, my black friend; thar's trouble ahead, and you and I must see what it is."

CHAPTER X.

SURROUNDED.

TOM TABOR and his fair companion kept on their way in search of some settlement where they might obtain food.

But they looked in vain. Unacquainted with this part of the country, they at length found themselves ascending a wooded hill, on the summit of which they had noticed a small hut.

Hoping that it might prove to be inhabited, they hurried to the door, and Tom knocked.

There was no response.

The boy then looked in one of the windows, to discover that the place was deserted.

Hanging up on one side, however, were strips of venison; while a couch of skins in a corner seemed to betoken that the place had been lately occupied.

"We will force open the door," said Tom.

"But have we a right to do that?"

"Under the circumstances," said the boy, patting his empty stomach, "I think we have. Besides, if there's anything to pay, I'll pay it," he added, taking a purse from an inside pocket of his jacket. "The reds didn't find my money, at any rate. I had that secret pocket made on purpose for hidin' things in, but I wish it had been large enough to hold my rifle, in which case the varmints wouldn't have got that, either."

"How will you open the door?"

"I have a patent for that," said Tom.

Stepping back half a dozen paces, he ran at the door, throwing himself sideways against it. As it was not very firmly secured, it gave way at once.

"Here we are," said the lad to his companion.

"We can go to housekeepin', now."

Minnie blushed deeply at these words, and a slight smile hovered about her pretty mouth for some time after.

"Halloa! what's this?" continued Tom, as his gaze fell upon an old envelope, lying on the floor.

The address was "Edward Tabor," and the handwriting was his own.

"I see," thought Tom, "this hut has been my father's! The envelope is that of a letter which I sent to him, months ago."

He said nothing to Minnie about the discovery he had made. He liked and admired the girl so much that he trembled at the idea of her knowing that he was the son of the man who, as reported, had taken her father's life.

"Here is a table and here is a chair," said the youth, pointing to a board, laid across two logs, and to the piece of a sawed tree-trunk, which would do for a seat.

His companion sat down, and Tom helped her to venison.

"Eat away," he said, "and I will go and get you a drink."

He picked up an old earthen mug from the rude table, and left the hut.

"Don't be gone long," said Minnie.

"There's a stream under the hill," said the boy. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

Not long had he been gone when the young girl was startled at seeing the form of a hideous-looking Crow rise suddenly from under the heap of skins, in the corner!

This savage, who was of short stature, had a large head and face, and a deep scar between the eyes added to his ugliness.

"Ugh!" he grunted, springing to the side of the girl, and brandishing his tomahawk above her head—"no make noise, or Moloke quick scalp."

Minnie sat motionless and silent with terror, for an instant; then she glanced toward the open door, but she saw, as yet, no sign of Tom.

"White boy go for water. He have to go more far than he think, for the water of the stream is muddy, and he will look for more. The Crow braves are not far off, and they will make him prisoner. Come, you go with Moloke; no make cry, or me quick kill."

He seized her arm as he spoke, and forced her to accompany him.

They descended the hill, and soon Moloke, with the fair captive, was hurrying through the thicket.

When Tom returned to the hut, to find Minnie gone, he was both surprised and puzzled.

"What can have become of her?" he muttered.

He left the hut and called her by name, but there came no reply.

All at once, glancing below him, he beheld half a dozen Crows advancing up the hill.

"If run—shoot!" cried one, aiming a rifle toward him.

Tom bounded through the open doorway of the hut, and closed and fastened the door, as the Indian's bullet whistled past his ears.

Then, through a small hole in the logs of the hut, he thrust the muzzle of his empty pistol.

"Keep back!" he shouted. "The first who takes another step is a dead man!"

The Crows skulked behind knolls of earth and clumps of bushes on the hillside, meanwhile stealing toward the hut.

"I reckon now that Minnie has been captured and taken off by some of those varmints," muttered Tom. "They'll soon have me, too, in

their clutches, for I am without arms and ammunition."

"Step aside, lad, and give me a show at the cussed critters!" was uttered in a deep voice, close behind the youth.

He turned, and to his intense surprise beheld a stout hunter with a heavily-bearded face and keen, penetrating gaze, while close behind him stood Jumble, the whites of his eyes rolling as usual when he was terrified or agitated in any way, while he grasped his huge horse-pistol by the muzzle, holding it upside down.

"Halloa! Where did you come from?" he gasped, looking from one to the other of his visitors.

"Thar's no time fur explaining now," said Haskins, his eyes twinkling in a peculiar manner as he took a quick survey of the boy from head to foot. "I kin only say that I'm mou'ty glad I got hyar jest in time to be of sarvice to you. Come, Jumble," he added, addressing the negro; "stand by with your pistil, to fire after I do and while I'm reloading."

"Yer's shuah dese yere logs am waterproof?" said Jumble, casting a scared look about him.

"Fire-proof, you mean," said the hunter.

"Yes; you kin bet no bullets would go through these logs, which was put up by a partick'lar friend of mine."

"A friend of yours?" said Tom. "What was his name?"

"Ned Tabor," was the answer, as the speaker leveled his rifle at an Indian and fired.

The piece was well-aimed, and the shoulder of the savage, the only part of him visible, was pierced by the bullet.

"You are then a friend of my father?" said Tom, shaking hands with Haskins, as soon as he had reloaded. "I am Tom Tabor, his son."

"Is that so?" said Haskins, with much interest. "I'm mou'ty glad to meet you then, and to be of sarvice to you."

Jumble had advanced to the hole in the logs, but the moment he looked through, he sprung back so quickly that he knocked Tom off his feet.

"You little varmint!" cried the lad, pushing him away from him. "Here! give me the pistol."

"Yer can hab it, an' welcome," answered the darky. "De fac' is, I's subjec' at times to de St. Vitus!"

Tom, leaving the negro sprawling on the floor, went to the window of the hut, and seeing the arm of an Indian protrude from behind a bush, as he crept along, he banged away at it.

The bullet passed through the wrist of the savage, who, with a grunt, dropped the tomahawk he held.

Bang! went Haskins's rifle the next moment, and an Indian was shot in the leg.

"Thar'll be a crippled set on 'em, ef they keep on," remarked the hunter, as he reloaded his weapon.

Tom loaded his pistols from the speaker's proffered ammunition-pouch, and a tolerably steady fire was kept up against the Indians, who finally withdrew.

"We've driven them off!" said Tom, exultingly.

"Gib me dat pls'll" now cried Jumble, springing to his feet and holding out his hands for his weapon. "Let me hab one shot at dem yeller niggers!"

Tom gave up the pistol, when, putting the muzzle through the hole in the logs, the darky would have pulled trigger had not Haskins prevented him.

"It's only a waste of fodder," he said. "We must be car'ful of that."

"Tell me how you came into this hut without my knowing it," said Tom. "It is the strangest thing I ever heard of."

"First, you and the nigger better help yourselves to the provisions on this table. Thar's no knowing what may happen, and it's best to fortify the stummick while you kin."

At this hint Tom "fell to," eating with the relish of a keen appetite.

When he had finished, Haskins procured from a corner of the hut a small leather bag, and stocking it with venison, together with some meal cakes, taken from his own wallet, slung it over the lad's shoulders.

"Thar, you hev a supply fur some days," he remarked.

"Thanks," said Tom. "And now please to answer my questions. In the first place, do you know where my father now is? Is he still at large?"

"Yes, he is; I'm shore of that. I know whar he is, too."

"Tell me where, for I am looking for him."

"Thar, you ask too much. To no living soul will I tell whar Ned Tabor is!"

"But I am his own son. You don't think I—"

"Pack that, ef you please. I know you'd do everything to help him; still you being with him would get you, too, in trouble, ef he should be diskivered."

"Do you think my father is guilty of the crime of which he is accused?"

But, ere the hunter could reply, yells were heard all around the hut, and blows upon the door indicated that attempts were being made to force it open!

"We're sarcumvented, shore as you're born!" cried Haskins. "Another party of them Crows has j'ined t'others, and they're attacking the hut!"

"Don we's los' shuah!" yelled Jumble, as he cowered in the corner, and commenced to roll himself up in the heap of skins there.

"You little fool!" said Haskins, "we can go the same way we came!"

"I's afraid dey'll be at de entrance ob dat subterraneum," responded the negro.

"Very well, then we'll leave you byar, if you prefer it," said Haskins.

"No! no! I's ready to go wid de res'," cried the darky. "Oh! fur de Lord's sake, make hastel!"

Haskins now went to the center of the hut, and, raising a strip of buffalo-hide there, seized a piece of rope under it, upon which he pulled. To the surprise of Tom Tabor, he then saw a trap lifted, disclosing a pit beneath.

"Halloa! a splendid contrivance," said the boy.

"Yes, it is, and a convenient one in a case of this kind," answered the hunter.

"The trap, of course, as you kin see, is made of wood, but the top is smoothly covered over with hard clay, same as that of the floor, so that no one, ef he wasn't posted on the thing, would know it was thar. Jest jump down thar, and I'll show you whar the outlet is."

Tom let himself drop into the pit, which was not more than seven feet deep, and the "darky" followed in such haste that he narrowly escaped coming down on his head.

Haskins now carefully closed the trap and fastened it on the inside, after which he joined his companion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST GIRL.

"FOLLOW me," said the hunter, as he crawled into a hole, leading slantingly downward from one side of the pit.

The "darky" and the white boy keeping behind him, followed him for a distance of about twenty feet, when he paused at an opening before him, and listened.

"Thar's no Injuns outside," he said, "and we mou't as well crawl out."

"Am it not bes' to stay heah?" said Jumble. "Dar's de most amsolute safety in dis yere place."

"We are not shore of that," said Haskins. "The Injuns hev keen eyes, and mou't diskiver the trap. It are sartint that they'll suspect something of the sort, when they see how suddenly we've disappeared."

As he spoke he pushed out a bowlder which he had placed over the opening, easily rolling it aside.

"Now, byar we are, half-way down the hill, on the side opposite to whar them varmint came up. In my opinion, they're all on the top of the hill."

Followed by his companions, he emerged from the opening, and, having rolled the bowlder against the hollow, he kept on.

The three, entering the thicket, moved swiftly along.

They had nearly passed through the woods, when they heard footsteps rapidly approaching from the opposite direction.

Jumble took to his heels, but Haskins and Tom, scrambling up a tree, hid themselves among the thick, leafy branches.

"Here they come. They are the Lynch-gang Wolves!" said the hunter. "I must keep out of sight, for being your father's friend, they would take me prisoner."

In fact the party, consisting of its dozen fierce young members, with Trapper John at their head, were seen approaching the tree. They stood gazing toward it, yelling and flourishing their knives, as if they suspected that some one was there.

Finally John looked keenly up at the branches.

"Come down!" he called. "I hev you, at last."

The two fugitives made no reply.

John then pointed his rifle toward the tree.

"Come, I see yer," he continued, "and ef yer don't come, I'll hev to fire, which I don't want to do, as I'd prefer taking you alive."

"It's you they see, not me," whispered Haskins to Tom.

"All right; then I'll save you," replied the youth.

He disengaged himself from the leafy screen, and looked down at John. The latter uttered a cry of disappointment.

"So it's only you after all," he cried. "I thought it was yer father, and that I had him fast at last."

Tom descended the tree.

"I wish I knew where to look for my father," he remarked. "I have been hunting for him, but I can find no trace of him."

"Hev yer seen anything of Miss Lormer?" inquired John, as the two moved toward his party.

Tom then explained about the girl.

"So you've been in her company," said the young trapper, looking displeased; "and what's worse yer've 'lowed her to be carried off by Injuns."

"I told you how that happened."

"That girl must be found and rescued," said John. "Had she been under my charge, I'd hev known better than to leave her even fur a minute."

"There's no use wasting time talking about it," said Tom. "We had better start at once on the search."

"You kin go your way, and I'll go mine," said John. "I don't think my men would keer to hev with 'em the son of the very chap they hev been lookin' fur."

"I am not anxious to remain in your company," said Tom, and he at once moved off.

John and his party took another direction. They had not proceeded far when they imagined they saw upon the ground the faint tracks here and there of a girl's shoes and of an Indian's moccasins.

The tracks, however, were soon lost on the harder ground further beyond.

Soon after John and the rest of the men separated, going off in different directions, with the understanding that they were to meet at a certain point near the bank of the stream.

The trapper-boy walked into the very depths of the forest, to suddenly behold far ahead of him, ascending the side of a valley, the Crow who had captured Minnie.

He had fastened a rope about the waist of the girl and was leading her along by it, now and then turning and threateningly flourishing his tomahawk when he thought she seemed inclined to lag.

"I'll soon put a stop to sech work, you big varmint!" muttered John, as he raised his rifle.

His aim was long and careful, for he was afraid of hitting the girl.

At last, taking advantage of a moment when the savage moved sideways, he pulled trigger. The piece rung sharply through the woods, and the Indian dropped his tomahawk, as the bullet pierced his arm.

With his other hand he pulled the captive

swiftly along, and a moment later he disappeared with her in the thick shrubbery.

At last the boy came upon what he believed were the tracks of the Indian and the girl. They led him to the bank of a stream, where they terminated.

"The critter hev taken to a canoe!" he thought.

He ran along the bank until he came to a spot where the water showed many rocks and snags, which would have rendered further navigation impossible.

Directly before him he saw the entrance to a cave.

Cocking his piece, he entered it. It was of some extent and at the further end the boy beheld an opening.

He sprung toward it, passed through it and looked about him.

But he could discover no traces of the two persons he sought.

Suddenly, on moving further, he uttered a cry of dismay.

A lock of blood-stained hair lay on the ground, which here showed evidences of a struggle.

"Too late!" cried John. "The varmint has scalped the gal!"

He picked up the lock of hair, and looked at it. It consisted only of four or five threads, but these, long, black, glossy and shining, had been torn from Minnie's head!

"That's an end to my futur' prospects," he muttered.

He hurried on, but he searched in vain for the Indian.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLLOW TREE.

MINNIE had been led a long distance by her captor ere the two were seen and fired upon by Trapper John.

The latter's bullet, as already stated, struck the savage in the arm. The wound was a severe one, but the Crow, not even by a grimace, would show what he suffered before his captive.

After dodging into the shrubbery he turned off to the right and led the girl to the bank of a stream where there was a canoe. He made his captive enter it, and then, seizing a paddle, he guided the light craft swiftly along with the current until he reached the place where rocks and snags hindered his further progress.

Leaving the canoe with his companion, he then shoved the craft among some rocks which bordered the stream.

Minnie seeing him thus occupied, resolved to make an attempt to escape. She darted into the cave in the rock near her, and ran on as fast as she could go.

With an angry ejaculation the Crow followed in pursuit, flourishing his tomahawk in his uninjured hand, and threatening to brain the fugitive if she did not stop.

Minnie, however, kept on.

Finally, having emerged from the further opening of the cave, she found herself approaching the edge of a rocky precipice with her pursuer not more than ten yards behind her.

She soon gained the edge of the rock, which

she now perceived was not more than ten feet high with a heap of dry leaves at its base, evidently blown there from the trees during the recent gale.

She resolved to leap that distance, and was about to do so, when she felt the left hand of the savage twisted in one of the streaming locks of her hair.

Before he could obtain a better hold, she sprung from her position, leaving the lock in the grasp of the Indian, who transferred it to his right hand, which was covered with blood from his wound, ere he threw it away. The wind, catching the blood-stained lock, blew it to the spot where it was afterward found, as shown, by Tripper John.

The girl landed upon her feet, unhurt, among the leaves at the base of the rock from which she had sprung. At the same moment the savage hurled his tomahawk at her, and she heard the weapon go whistling past her ears, for, as he threw it, the Indian's foot had struck a protruding rock, causing him to stumble and miss his aim.

He fell headlong from the summit of the rock, striking his skull against the blade of the tomahawk with force enough to stun him.

Looking behind her and seeing him lying there, Minnie quickened her pace, so that by the time he had fully recovered his senses, she was out of his sight.

The girl did not slacken her pace until she reached the same thicket from which she had been conducted by her captor.

For about an hour she wandered on hoping to fall in with some friendly party of whites; then she seated herself on a log to rest.

She had not been long there, when she heard quick footsteps behind her, and rising, she ran on thinking the Indian was pursuing her.

"Hold on thar, Miss Lormer," was shouted in a loud voice, "yer's running away from a friend!"

She recognized the voice of Trapper John, and paused.

"Thank God!" he said. "So yer's not killed, after all, miss. I thought shore yer'd been scalped!"

The girl described how she had escaped.

"Yer's mou'ty lucky to git away from that Injun. I kin tell yer. The trappers calls him Old Scalp-lock, for he doesn't often spar' them as gits in his clutches, but straightway rips off the'r scalps, as ef they war nothin' but the rinds of old cheese!"

This comparison was extremely disagreeable to Minnie. In fact it was his coarseness of manner more than anything else which had always prejudiced her against the boy.

"I hope you will conduct me to some settlement from which I may reach home," she said, "or, at least, may join the friend who has been so kind to me."

"What friend mou't that be?" said John, his eyes flashing with anger and spite.

Minnie had been going to tell him, but fearing from his manner that it might induce the young trapper to injure the youth in some way, she resolved not to mention his name.

"It does not matter," she said. "Are we near any settlement?"

"We're thirty miles or so from the nearest, but yer need fear nothin', while yer's under my protection."

He brought a log for her to sit upon, and gave her a drink of water from a canteen slung at his side.

"I've somethin' to say to yer," he then remarked. "Facts is, yer must hev guessed what I'm goin' to say 'fore this. You well know that I've always had plenty of gals after me in our native village, but you are the one I would prefer."

"Unfortunately," said Minnie, with spirit, "this preference of yours is thrown away!"

"Thrown away? What do you mean?"

"Simply that it happens I do not want you!"

"Come now, yer's joking."

"No, I am in earnest, and I hope you will drop this foolishness and guide me to some settlement."

At the same moment a noise was heard as of stealthy footsteps approaching.

"Injuns, shore as you're alive!" said the boy. "Don't leave me ef yer don't want to be scalped! I'll defend yer, miss, with my life."

John meant this, for in spite of his coarseness and conceit, he was brave.

"Hyar! go in thar, please," he said, pointing to the hollow of a large tree near the girl.

She glided into the hollow, and in the opening John pushed a heavy log, jamming it so firmly between the edges of the aperture that it would require considerable strength to remove it. Thus securely shut in the tree, Minnie was yet enabled to breathe, as the hollow extended upward the whole length of the trunk, which being old and decayed, was but eleven feet high.

The boy now concealed himself behind an adjoining tree, but as he did so he was seen by the Indians, who, ten in number, were rapidly advancing. They were Crows, and were mostly armed with spears, only three of them having rifles.

As they came on the boy pointed his piece at the savages.

"Git back, or yer's a dead dog!" he said to the foremost of the party.

The Indians dodging behind trees, continued to advance.

The lad's weapon rung, and one of the band was wounded in the shoulder. Ere he could reload the party were upon him. A tomahawk was raised to cleave his skull, but the chief of the party caught the uplifted arm.

"No!" he grunted. "Trapper John kill too many Crows. We must make torture. Death by tomahawk too good for him."

Then they led him off.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

JIM JUMBLE did not pause in his flight until he had proceeded a long distance.

"Well, now, here I is, all alone. Dar's only one t'ing fur me to do, and dat am to streak it back to Central City as fas' as I can go."

As the country was well-known to him, he hurried along through the woods, taking a path which would first lead him out of the thicket, and then among the mountains between him and the settlement he desired to reach.

The noise of approaching steps and the guttural voices of Indians caused him to turn from his course and take a new direction, which led him deeper into the thicket.

"It seems as if de woods am alive wid Injuns to-day!" muttered the "darky" when, after dodging about for hours, he still heard the voices of savages, apparently on all sides of him.

In fact the Crows, in different parties, were searching for Haskins and Tom Tabor, who had so mysteriously disappeared from the hut.

The shades of twilight were closing about the negro, ere he found himself out of reach of the Indians' voices.

"Tank de Lord! I can res' in peace now," he muttered, seating himself on a stump at the foot of a tree.

Finally he rose and moved on through the woods, but he had not proceeded far when he heard a sound which made him pause, rolling the whites of his eyes about him in a frightened manner.

"Is there any one there? If there is, I ask that I may be liberated from this place!"

"What's dat?—who's dat?" gasped Jumble.

"It is I!" was answered, in a sort of shriek.

"Quick, Jumble! get me out of this dreary place!"

The negro stared at a huge knot on the trunk of an old tree in front of him. The knot had something the appearance of a human face, and it was from this that the voice had seemed to come!

"Whew!—whew-ew!" half whistled the startled boy to himself. "I've heard ob dem *buggy-boos* dat haunts de woods, but I nebber had orakelar demo'stration ob de fac' before. What's to become ob dis nig? Fus' it's de Injuns, and den it's— Oh! dar it goes again!" he interrupted, as a sort of groan now seemed to come from the face-like knot on the tree.

The frightened "darky" did not wait to hear more.

He gave one yell, and then away he went, plunging deeper and deeper into the woods.

In his alarm he took no heed of the course he was pursuing until he suddenly plunged into a swamp.

The cry that escaped him as he found himself sinking might have been heard for a mile.

"Help! help!" he yelled, sawing the air with his arms, as he sunk deeper and deeper. "I's goin' under! I's under already! and may de good Lord hab mercy on dis chile! Now de mud hab flowed ober my mouf, and now it am up to my ears, and now— Oh! Hoo!—hoo-oo!"

"Stop your noise," came a deep voice, "and I'll soon have you out of tbat!"

"Massa Haskins!" cried Jumble, joyfully.

The hunter's form loomed through the gathering gloom as he came to the edge of the swamp.

With one powerful pull he rescued Jumble from his uncomfortable situation.

"How came you byar?" he inquired, as the "darky" ran to a stream, and proceeded to wash the mud from his clothes. "I thought you knew the country better than to tumble into a swamp."

"It all come ob dat knot," said the "darky."

"Knot?"

"Yes, sah, de *buggy-boos* am in de woods for sartin! I heard one on 'em!"

"What nonsense is this you're talking about?"

"I tell you sah," said Jumble, positively, "dat, shuah as you're stan'in' dar, wid dat cap on yer head, and dat rifle in one han', and dem leggins on bof' legs, and—"

"Out with it!" cried Haskins, impatiently. "When did you see and heer this wonder? I'll bet it was nothin' more than a screech-owl."

"It spoke; it hab a voice, same as you or me, and it use words de same."

Haskins reflected.

"Come," he said; "you shall show me whar it is."

"Not for de worl' would I go back to dat *buggy-boo*!" gasped Jumble. "Besides, I couldn't fin' de way now, if I should try."

As he spoke, two fierce young fellows sprung suddenly from some bushes, a few paces off.

"Hab! hah! We have you now!" cried one, pointing a pistol at the hunter's head. "Surrender! or we'll—"

But he did not finish the sentence, for Haskins suddenly pushed the little negro against the speaker with a force, which, as the head of the "darky" came in contact with his stomach, caused him to tumble back against his comrade, who was close behind him.

His pistol went off as he fell, the bullet whizzing up into the air, and the next moment Haskins had disappeared in the gloom of the thicket.

"After him, Jack!" cried the youth who had fallen, as he picked himself up.

"Dis nig will help yer cotch him!" said Jumble, as he darted into the thicket, also vanishing in the gloom.

He had recognized the voices of the boys belonging to Trapper John's gang, and he had no wish to fall into their hands again.

Haskins kept on through the woods, making toward the rendezvous where he had first been discovered by the negro.

Concealing himself behind a tree he waited until his pursuers had passed him; then he kept on, and, finally reaching his cave, was soon safe in his underground retreat.

The negro had taken another direction, until suddenly he was met by a youth, whom despite the darkness, he recognized as Tom Tabor.

"Oh! I's so glad to see ye!" cried the "darky."

CHAPTER XIV.

JUMBLE ON WATCH.

JUMBLE now told Tom about his meeting with Haskins.

"I like that fellow," said Tom. "There's something about him that attracts me."

"It am de fac' dat he's allers provided wid good grub," said Jumble.

"No, I didn't mean that. I like him as a man. He appears to be a noble fellow."

"Dar yer's right, but what yer s'pose makes him so 'fraid ob dem white folks—dat Lynch-law Gang, dat's huntin' for—lor—de sheriff's murderer."

"He was a friend of my father," said Tom,

"and they want to capture him to make him tell where my father is hidden."

"How long sence yer've seen yer fadder?" inquired Jumble.

"As much as five years."

"Does yer 'spec' to ebber see him ag'in?"

"Of course, or I would not have come out on so long a tramp,"

Jumble scratched his head.

"I's heard it said," he remarked, "dat de way ob de transgressor am hard. Now, am it not possorable dat dem folks dat commits a crime am punishable by bein' turned into buggy-boos?"

"What are you driving at?" said Tom.

"Jest dis. S'posin' yer fadder killed dat man dat am accused ob bein' killed, and dat accuses him ob killin' him, and dat yer fadder afterwards came to de mature conclusion dat he'd kill his elf, or cause hisself ter be killed, which amounts to pretty much de same t'ing—well, den, de accused ob de accuser, perishin' in dat summanary fashion, mightn't be be turned for de double crime, into one ob dem buggy-boos?"

It was a long time before the boy could get at the "darks" meaning through the "rigma-role" he made use of.

"You little fool!" he then said, "did it not occur to you that the voice you heard, seeming, as you say, to have been uttered by the knot on the tree, might have come from the inside of it?"

"I didn't think ob dat," said Jumble, his white eyes shining at the brilliancy of this idea.

"Did the voice sound like that of any person you had ever heard speak before?"

"Now I t'ink ob it, it was familiar, but I can't t'ink 'zactly whar I ebber heer such a voice before."

"We will go to that tree, to-night. It is my opinion that some one has been shut up inside of it."

"I don't presume I could find it in de dark," remarked Jumble.

"We will try, at any rate. The person, whoever he is, may be half starved to death."

The two set out at once on the search.

They wandered about for hours, but Jumble was unable to find the "talking tree" in the darkness.

All at once, as the two kept on, they heard a faint voice ahead of them.

"Is there any one there?"

"Who speaks?" cried Tom.

"Thank God! it is you!" responded the voice. "I am shut up here in a hollow tree, and am half dead for a drink of water and for purer air!"

"Miss Lormer!" cried Tom, joyfully.

He sprung forward, and in a few moments, he and Jumble had displaced from the entrance to the hollow, the heavy log which Trapper John had jammed into it.

Minnie, weak and trembling, emerged, to soon inform her rescuer why she had been put in the tree.

"The log was so tightly squeezed in the hollow," she continued, "that I could not get it out. Oh! I am so glad I have fallen in with you!" she added, and Tom could see the black eyes of the girl shining through the gloom.

He gave her a drink of water from his canteen, and also some food from his well-stocked wallet.

Explanations were then made.

"I hope we will not part company again," said Tom, "until I have seen you safe in some settlement, and even after that, I hope—"

He was going to say that he hoped he might be permitted to see her again, but he checked himself as the horrible thought again occurred to him that it was his father who had murdered the father of this sweet girl!

"I shall always be glad to see you," said Minnie, softly. And he could detect, in spite of the darkness, the arch glance which she gave him, as she uttered the words.

"Poor child!" he thought. "She does not yet know who I am! No one has yet told her, though I doubt not Trapper John would have done so had he not been captured just when he was by the Indians. I must caution the 'darks' to say nothing to her about it, until after I leave her at a settlement."

On learning that Jumble had previously been near the hollow tree, and heard her voice, which had frightened him away, the girl could not help laughing, and it seemed to Tom that he could stand forever listening to the music of that merry voice.

The three finally moved on to a small clearing, where they resolved to pass the night. The clearing was surrounded by shrubbery and by masses of dry brushwood.

"This is the best we can do," said Tom, as he proceeded to put up a sort of bower for Minnie's accommodation.

The girl seemed well pleased with what had been done for her, and, entering the little hut, she tried to compose herself for a nap.

Meanwhile she kept thinking of Tom Tabor. "He is a bright boy," she thought, "and I like him, ever so much, but there are times when he seems so sad! I wonder what can make one so young as he is that way."

Tom was very drowsy, and he concluded to put the negro boy on guard, believing that the very fact of his being so easily frightened would make him a good watcher.

"Take care, Jumble," he said. "Keep your eyes open."

Jumble stood up like a corporal, motionless and straight, the collar of his shirt drawn up to his ears. Only the whites of his eyes could be seen, moving from side to side.

"Dat order shall be fulfilled!" he said.

"If you hear footsteps, let me know."

"Dat command shall also be verified!" said Jumble.

"Don't run away, but wake me if anything happens."

"Dat 'conjunction' shall be granted same as de oddsers, sah!"

Tom threw himself down on a heap of dry twigs, which he had pulled from among the bushes, and he was soon in a sound slumber.

With his huge horse-pistol over his shoulder, Jim Jumble paced to and fro at the distance of fifteen yards from the sleeping boy.

"Hal' what's dat?" he suddenly muttered, stopping short. "If I didn't heah de murmur ob a voice, den I's certainly mistook. Dar it

goes again!" he added, as a humming noise was heard a short distance off.

He slunk away toward the sleeper, intending to wake him, when, all at once, with a spiteful whiz and thug, something struck him full between the eyes!

"Oh, Lord! I's shot! I's shot! I can feel a bullet creepin' roun' and roun', inside my forehead!" he yelled, rolling over and over upon the ground.

Awakened by the noise, Tom Tabor ran to the "darky's" side.

"Stop that racket, will you?" he cried.

"What is the matter?" called Minnie, from her tent.

"It is nothing," said Tom. "Jumble, as usual, has got the fidgets."

"I's shotted! I tell yer I's shotted in de forehead!" howled the little "darky."

Tom now lighted a match, to see a huge beetle clinging to the negro's hair.

"There's the bullet," said he, brushing the beetle off upon the ground.

Jumble stared at the insect in surprise.

Then he sprung up and, with his heel, stamped the bug to death.

"Dar, you mean, contemptuous t'ing!" he cried. "Dar, now! dat's de fate ob de enemies ob dis nig. Good-by to yer tricks after dat. I's not de pusson to put up wid yer nonsense!"

"Don't make any more useless noises," said Tom, as he again lay down to compose himself to sleep.

Again shouldering his pistol, Jumble paced to and fro.

An hour later, Tom came and said he would take the lookout for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER XV.

WARM QUARTERS.

TOWARD dawn, the watchful boy heard the creaking of branches in the thicket.

He awoke Jumble, told him that he believed Indians were coming, and that he hoped the negro would do his duty.

"We has no show at all," said the "darky." "Dem Injuus is 'legends,' and we's on'y twol!"

"All the more reason that we should do our best," responded Tom. "Remember, we have a girl to protect. We must not go back on her."

"Speakin' ob goin' back," said Jumble, "s'posin' I goes and sees if I can find dat Haskins, to come and gib us a lift?"

"No, no; stay here and help me pile up these logs," said Tom, pointing to a number of pieces of timber, which had evidently been put there by some hunter with the intention of erecting a hut.

"What's de use ob dem?"

"They'll make us a sort of fort. We can pile them breast high, in a square."

He set Jumble to work, but the "darky's" hands trembled so much that he was constantly dropping the logs on his toes, and dancing about with the pain.

At last, however, the little breastwork was finished.

Meanwhile Minnie had risen and come out of her temporary habitation.

"Crouch down behind the logs," said Tom. "You'll be safer there than anywhere else."

"Can I not be of use?" inquired Minnie. "I can load the pistols while you fire."

"You might load Jumble's for him," said Tom.

"S'posin' I loads and Miss Lormer does de firin'," suggested Jumble, whose teeth were chattering.

"None of that, Jumble. Pluck up your spirits and be a man," said Tom.

At that moment several rifles rung, and the bullets cut the air close to the heads of the occupants of the little breastwork.

Jumble at once crouched down behind the logs, and his companions could not persuade him to stand up.

"Would it not have been better to run away?" said Minnie.

"We had no chance for that," answered Tom, "as the Indians came up all about the brush, so as to surround us."

Having obtained a good supply of ammunition from Haskins, he kept firing his pistol and also that of the "darky," which Minnie loaded for him.

That he thus wounded several of his assailants was evident, for he could see them tying bandages about their arms and legs.

The breastwork of logs proved to be a good place of defense. All the bullets fired at Tom lodged in the timber.

The rapidity of his shots served to impress the savages with the idea that they were dealing with more than one enemy.

Presently they stopped firing.

"Are they retreating?" inquired Minnie.

At these words Jumble popped up his head.

"Gib me dat pis'l," he said. "I's gwine to hab some shots at de enemy!"

"No, they are having a talk," said Tom.

As he spoke, columns of smoke were seen rising from the dry brush which surrounded the clearing. Then there was a crackling sound, and lurid flames were seen bursting from the four corners of the brush!

"Oh! de Lord!" cried Jumble. "We's all burned up now, shuah! De smoke am a-rollin' and de fire am a-crackin' all roun' us."

"Is it so bad as that?" inquired Minnie of Tom.

"They have set fire to the brush," the boy answered, uneasily. "There's no getting over that!"

The blazing circle of flame was creeping every moment nearer to the log breastwork.

"Be ready!" said Tom, to the girl. "We must try to break through the brush where it has not yet taken fire. There are yet one or two places."

"The Indians will be there waiting for us with their tomahawks," said Minnie, shuddering.

"There is no help for it," answered Tom. "I'll fight for you until I drop. That is the best I can do."

Through the leaping flames, the savages could be seen, on the other side, flourishing their tomahawks, while they uttered fierce yells.

Tom, drawing his knife and grasping it firmly with one hand, while he held his loaded pistol with the other, prepared to make the rush.

"Keep close behind me," he said, to the girl. "If I fall, run on."

At that critical moment shouts were heard, blended with the repeated ring of rifles, and the savages were seen taking to their heels.

"We are saved!" cried Minnie. "If I don't mistake, they are some of Trapper John's party who have rescued us."

Soon after, they saw the Lynch-law Gang go rushing past.

"They do not know we are here," said Tom. "There they go in pursuit of the Indians."

As he spoke, he put an arm about the girl's waist, and hurried her through the shrubbery.

Jumble followed, and the three safely reached the other side of the flaming nets, undarned, except by a slight scorching of the hands and face.

Neither the white men nor the fugitives were longer in sight.

"Now, Jumble," said Tom, "you can make yourself useful as our guide to the nearest settlement."

"Which am much as twenty mile off," said the "darker," as he looked around him.

"First we will have breakfast," continued Tom.

As soon as the frugal repast was partaken of, the three kept on their way. In an hour they reached some lofty heights.

They rested for a short time, and then continued their way. Tom enjoyed helping Minnie over difficult rocks, as it afforded him a chance to take her hand, and to now and then put his arm about the round, supple waist.

The mountains seemed to become steeper and more rugged the further they advanced, and when night came they had not traveled a greater distance than seven miles.

Tom now found a snug hollow in the rocks to serve as a shelter for Minnie, and again the two boys took turns at standing watch.

Nothing occurred that night to alarm even Jumble.

Early in the morning after they had partaken of their plain repast, they kept on. At noon they halted in a thicket, on the side of a high hill, and had dinner.

Ahead of them, they could see a lofty, apparently inaccessible cliff, which rose from the center of a lake.

"How far are we now from the settlements?" inquired Tom.

"We's 'bout twenty mile," said the "darker."

"Twenty miles? What are you talking about? We were only that distance when we started!"

"I's obliged to repeat," said Jumble, winking both eyes. "We's twenty mile from dat settlement."

"Come, now! you're chaffing," cried Tom.

"No, sah," answered Jumble, striking an attitude. "Under de present serious calamitous circumstances ob de case, I would scorn to trifle wid de affeckshuns ob dem dat relies on me for protection!"

"Pack that, little nigger! Who's talking about affections? I say you are mistaking the distance."

"I's obliged to contradict dat aspiration," answered the "darker." "I would fudder obsarv dat, ef we keep on goin' as far again as we hab been progressin' already, we'd be forty mile from dat yere settlement."

"Explain yourself, or I'll punch your woolly head!" said Tom. "We've been going toward the settlement all this time, have we not?"

"No, sah."

"You black little muff! Which way have we been going, then?"

Jim Jumble drew himself up stiffly.

"We's been gwine roun' an' roun'," he said, rolling the whites of his eyes.

"Round and round! and why have you led us round and round?"

"De fac' is, I t'ought more dan once dat I seed movin' figgers like dem ob Injuns, and I had been tryin' all dis time to get roun' 'em!"

"Why didn't you speak to me about it? I'm half a mind to punch you for this!"

"My reasons for not speakin' on dat subjee' was fur de oblivious reason dat I didn't want to alarm missus, in de firs' place, and, in de second place, I was afraid dat you might t'ink dem figgers was nuffin' but animals, which may have been de case: still, I t'ought it best to take time by de forelock, and try and git roun' 'em!"

Ere Tom could answer, the "darker" suddenly pointed behind him, gasping out:

"Heah dey come! We's as good as gone coons now!"

Looking in the indicated direction, Minnie and Tom beheld a party of advancing Chows, who were descending a lofty elevation about a hundred yards off.

"It all comes of your leading us off in this direction!" said Tom to the negro.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERIOUS LAKE.

"What can we do?" cried Minnie, turning pale.

Tom threw a quick glance about him.

"We might find a canoe on the shore of that lake," he said. "You can see that the outlet of the lake is a stream with a swift current. A canoe might carry us along fast enough for us to escape."

He took her arm and rapidly descended the hill.

"Where is Jumble?" inquired Minnie, when they arrived at the base of the elevation.

Tom looked, but he could see no sign of the negro boy.

All at once he fancied he heard a faint shout. He ran to the place whence it came and found himself on the edge of a deep earth-hole, where the earth had at some time caved in.

The voice of the "darker" came up from this hole.

"Hallelujah! I's safe enough, now! Come down heah, de res' ob us!"

"Out of there, you little fool!" shouted Tom.

"The Indians will look there the first thing."

"No dey won't. Ef dey do, dey won't find dis chile, fur I's roll myself roun' an' roun' in de groun'."

Tom realized that he had no time to lose.

He ran back to Minnie, told her where the negro was hidden, and then kept on with her toward the lake.

They soon found the ground so marshy that they sunk to their ankles at every step.

This enabled the savages to gain upon them.

The dusky band had now reached the bill, and they discharged several rifles at the fugitives.

"Never mind their shots," said Tom to the girl. "They are not good at hitting."

The Indians, however, came on in pursuit, and they were soon within twenty yards of the fugitives, on the edge of the swamp.

A savage wearing a dirty blanket and leggings and whose face was hideously besmeared with ocher, called out to the twain:

"Best come back! If come back, no fire! Why keep on? What use of keeping on? Can not swim with girl in lake."

"Mind your own business—you big 'bummer!'" answered Tom, not in the least relaxing his speed.

"That is enough. The white boy shall die!" cried the Indian, as he aimed his rifle at the lad.

The latter perceiving that the Indian could not well help hitting him at so short a range, turned and fired at him his pistol.

"Ugh!" grunted the Crow, as he shifted his rifle to his left hand, and his arm which had been struck by the shot, dropped at his side.

"He'll wear his arm in a sling for some time," remarked Tom to his fair companion, as he hurried her on.

A younger savage now took the rifle from the wounded man.

"See if the white boy will escape the bullet of Trahnoah!" he cried.

He was about to pull trigger, and the fate of Tom Tabor seemed certain, when a stream of fire was seen to shoot from the summit of the cliff which towered from the lake, followed by the ring of the piece whence it came.

The Indian stood motionless for an instant, still pointing his weapon, then he fell forward upon his face, the weapon going off and the bullet striking the marsh.

There was a yell as of rage from the other savages, when they discovered that the youth was stone dead, and several of them, brandishing their tomahawks, sprung into the marsh in pursuit of the fugitives, who, they seemed determined should not escape them.

Tom had, by this time, reloaded his pistol, and he now sent another shot at his foes, one of whom was struck in the leg by the bullet.

The next moment the rifle on the cliff rung a second time, and down went another savage, wounded in the hip.

Tom Tabor, a few minutes later, gained the shore of the lake, but he looked in vain for a canoe.

A stout savage had reached the bank by running round the edge of the marsh, where the ground was comparatively firm. He had ensconced himself behind a tree, and Tom now saw him, not twenty feet distant, pointing his rifle straight at Minnie.

"Surrender quick or Crow shoot girl!" he

said, his fierce, blazing eyes glancing along the shining barrel of the piece. "Ugh! got fast now! boy can't get away!"

Instinctively Tom threw himself between the girl and the rifle.

"No! no!" she gasped. "You shall not kill yourself to save me!"

And as she spoke, she plunged directly into the lake.

"Come," she continued, as she struck out, for she was a good swimmer. "We may escape their bullets by going under the surface!"

Tom was about to leap into the lake, when the savage fired, and to the boy's horror he saw Minnie sink, leaving a streak of blood on the water.

The lad sprung at once from the bank, and swam toward the spot where she had sunk.

Then he dove, throwing out his arms and feeling for her.

To and fro he darted beneath the surface of the lake, but in vain. He could see nothing of Minnie.

When he arose to the surface to breathe he beheld the savage who had fired before, and who, by this time, had reloaded, pointing his weapon toward him.

"Come, or serve same way as girl!" grunted the Indian.

"Shoot if you want to, you varmint!" cried Tom. "I'll never surrender!"

The Indian pulled trigger, but as he did so, the boy quickly dove, thus avoiding the shot.

The Indian rapidly reloaded, and watched for the reappearance of the boy; but he waited in vain!

"Stranger! don't think shot hit him," grunted the savage, "but he don't come up. Must have drowned. Perhaps caught in snag."

The rest of the savages now came up, and a "talk" ensued.

It was evident that the strange disappearance of the lad had excited a great deal of surprise.

Finally, from the branches of some of the many willows, near the lake, a canoe was made, and one of the Indians entered it, paddled along the sheet of water, peering keenly into the clear depths.

Not a sign either of the body of the girl or of Tom Tabor could he discover. After he returned, another Indian got into the canoe, and also examined the lake, but without success.

The wonder of the savages was great. They talked over the affair for a long time ere they quitted the bank of the lake.

When some yards from it, they looked up at the summit of the cliff, from which had been fired the shot, which had killed one of their braves.

How had the person who fired that shot contrived to reach the top of the cliff, which rose nearly to the height of one hundred feet, and was too smooth on all sides to be scaled?

At length the Indians concluded that some supernatural agency had been at work to baffle them, for, in no other way could they account either for the remarkable disappearance of the two bodies or for the presence of a human being on an inaccessible cliff.

Believing that the lake must be haunted, they solemnly quitted its shores.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

TRAPPER JOHN, as previously stated, had been carried off a captive, soon after he had left Minnie in the hollow tree.

The Indians deprived him of his rifle and knife, but they did not discover a loaded two-barreled pistol, which he carried in a secret pocket of his coat.

"I'll make use of that, ef I git the chance, to clear myself of the varmints," thought the boy.

The savages led him to a wooded valley, and there, having bound him to a tree, they made a fire.

Finally a few who had gone away, returned with a large iron pot, half full of water.

"Ugh!" said a gaunt-looking fellow, with but one eye, which blazed like a lurid sun, "going to boil boy! How like that?"

And as he spoke, he smiled grimly on the lad.

The latter returned his look with one of supreme indifference.

"That will do you no good," he said.

"Make boy howl some. Boiling water hurt more than fire."

"I'll bet yer I won't say a word," answered John. "I hev a tough skin, and yer kin b'ile and b'ile it, but yer'll make no impression on it."

"Ugh! think boy lie."

"Ef yer'll untie me I'll show yer. Come now, yer jest take these thongs off of me, and I'll show yer what an Arizona boy kin stand. Yer see I'm from Arizona. That's whar I was born and brought up till I was thirteen."

"What would the white boy do?"

"Ef yer untie me yer'll see. I'll plunge one of my arms into that yere pot whar the water is now b'ilin', and yer'll not heer me give a single squeak."

The Crows held a brief "talk." Then they untied the captive, and surrounding him, made him walk to the pot.

He rolled up one sleeve almost to the shoulder, and plunged the naked arm into the boiling water, while at the same time he thrust his other arm under the breast of his coat.

He held the bared arm only for an instant in the water. As he withdrew it, he pulled forth his pistol with the other hand, and shot the savage on his right through the head. Dealing the one on the left a kick in the stomach which doubled him up, he bounded off, pursued by the others.

Spears were thrown and rifles discharged, but owing to his being among trees, John was not hit.

On he went, with his pursuers yelling behind him. He was a swift runner, and having finally reached masses of shrubbery which concealed him, he hurried toward some rocks, hoping to find a hollow in which he might hide, for his breath now was well-nigh spent.

He saw an opening in a rock before him, and into this he crawled just as the savages arrived within a few yards of the shrubbery.

"It was a mistake—my comin' hyar," he muttered. "They'll be sure to look heer the fust thing."

"You are right," said a deep voice behind him. "Here they come now."

In fact, the savages having vainly looked for

the fugitive in the shrubbery, were making straight for the opening into which he had crawled.

Before he could turn round to see who had spoken, he was pulled down into a pit, and some branches were thrust over the hole through which he had been drawn.

"Lie still," whispered he who had before spoken.

John lay motionless, and soon the savages were heard leaving the cave above to continue their search.

"Thar, now, they've gone," said the person who had so opportunely assisted the lad.

The latter looked at him, but so deep was the gloom that he could see little more than the beard on his face and the outline of his form.

Gradually, however, as his eyes became used to the darkness, he saw the man more distinctly.

"I thought so," he said. "I thought I knew yer voice. I'm sorry this has happened."

"Sorry what has happened?"

"That you hev saved my life, fur, in spite o' that, I must do my duty, and arrest yer."

Haskins, for he it was, laughed hoarsely.

"Yer kin laugh as much as yer like, but yer's my pris'ner fur all that!" said John, drawing his pistol and aiming it at the hunter's head. "Surrender, or I'll hev to put a bullet through yer! Dead or alive is the word of us Lynch-gang Wolves!"

"Pack that, my young kid," said Haskins, as, with one blow of his huge fist on the wrist of the lad, he sent the pistol flying from his grasp.

The weapon went off, and the bullet was heard striking the roof of the cavern.

"I reckon," continued Haskins, laughing as he seized his rifle, lying within his reach, "that I'm in a better condition fur arresting than fur being arrested! Thar's nothing, if I wanted to do it, to hinder my blowing out your brains, but, as I'm of a marceiful nature, I'll not do that even to the 'Wolf' that hunts me down!"

"You are very kind," sneered John, his eyes flashing at the thought of his helplessness.

"Whar's the rest of your boys?" continued Haskins.

"I don't know, and would not tell, ef I did."

"Well, you see you've diskivered my hiding-place," said Haskins, regretfully, and now I must look fur another. You mou't oblige me, sence I've been good enough to save you from Injuns and not to take your life afterward, by telling me ef I'll be likely to fall in with any of your gang."

"I hev nothing to say 'bout that," answered John, sullenly.

"Well, then, I won't ask any more questions. I'll jest leave you hyar in my quarters, whar you'll find plenty to eat while you stay."

"Yer cannot leave me. I shall follow you."

"I'll fix you so you can't do that, my kid," answered Haskins.

And before John could make any resistance he had thrown the noose of a rope over his legs, and drawn it taut, fastening the end of the rope to a rocky projection.

"That won't serve you," said the boy, derisively. "I can untie it."

"It's a hard knot—one of a peculiar kind, and ef you kin git it loose in less than half an hour, I'll give myself up to you."

John crept to the rocky projection and endeavored to unfasten the knot, but it resisted his efforts.

"It will take me at least an hour to git the knot loose!" he muttered, "and, before that, the fellow will again be out of my sight."

In fact Haskins had quietly left the cave while the lad was tugging at the knot, and he was now hurrying along through the woods.

Finally he found himself on the shore of a lake, from the center of which rose a lofty precipice.

"Thar's a hight which could never be climbed," he thought. "Ef now thar war only some secret way to git to the top of it, it would make sech a rendezvous fur me as would never be discovered!"

As he spoke he noticed a small animal on the extreme edge of the elevation.

It was a muskrat, and the hunter was puzzled as to how it had reached so lofty an elevation.

He watched the creature, to see it soon disappear. A few minutes later, from the water near the base of the precipice, appeared the creature, swimming off toward the further shore of the lake.

A suspicion of the truth at once flashed upon him.

He was a good swimmer, and having securely lashed his rifle to his back, arranged his wallet and his water-proof ammunition pouch, he struck out for the cliff.

When he was within a few feet of it he dove, keeping his eyes open under water.

Directly before him, half a fathom beneath the surface he beheld an opening in the rocky wall large enough to admit two persons.

He worked himself through it, and rising on the inside of it he found himself in a water-cave, with rocks projecting on one side of him.

Getting upon these rocks he looked upward, to perceive that the whole length of the precipice was tunneled by a hollow which, on one side, owing to rugged projections, was almost as easy to ascend as a stair case.

"Well, now, byar's a discovery worth making," he muttered. "I'll risk any one's finding me now."

He ascended to the top of the hight, and was gratified to perceive that it contained hollows and ledges which would render it an excellent stronghold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HORSE-STEALING.

WHEN Minnie disappeared in the lake, her arm had been grazed by the bullet of the Indian who had fired.

The blood which Tom Tabor had seen rise to the surface had come from the slight wound she had received.

She remained under water until she felt it necessary to breathe; then she came up to the surface.

To her surprise she rose in the water-cave of the cliff, for without being aware of it, she had swum through the opening near its base.

Surprised and half bewildered, she looked around her.

At the same moment Haskins emerged from behind a projection which he had just passed in a descent from the top of the elevation.

"Don't be afeared, gal," he said, looking at her intently. "I'll do the best I kin fur you. I'd hev shot the savage who last fired at you, had I been able to fetch him, but you see he was behind a tree, so that I couldn't reach him with a bullet."

Then he gazed at her arm.

"You are wounded!" he continued.

"It is nothing—only a scratch," answered Minnie. "That you are friendly, I do not doubt. For Heaven's sake, then, help that brave, noble boy who has done so much for me!"

"That's what I came down hyar fur," said Haskins, and he placed his rifle against the wall, and took off his pouch and wallet. "I've been watching both of you, and I reckon the lad by this time has also jumped into the lake."

So saying, he dove through the aperture, with his eyes wide open, to see the form of Tabor, a few feet ahead of him, under the water.

He at once struck out for the boy, and seizing him by the arm, drew him to the opening.

As the two rose in the water-cave, Tom looked first at his preserver, and then at Minnie standing on the rocks.

"She is safe!" were his first words.

"Oh! Tom, I am so glad! so glad to see you alive and well!" cried Minnie, clapping her hands.

"Yes, this good friend of ours has done us a great service," said Tom. "It would have been all up with us but for him."

"You're not hurt in any way?" said Haskins to the lad, as the two left the water.

"No," he answered. Then he noticed Minnie's arm, and a cry of dismay escaped him.

"The bullet only grazed the flesh," she said, smiling. "I mind it no more than I would the scratch of a needle."

Tom washed the blood from the beautiful rounded arm, and perceived that only the skin had been slightly scraped.

"Now," said Haskins, "we will go to the top of my stronghold; but first I'll arrange a contrivance which I fixed yesterday."

So saying, he rolled from the rocks a boulder, which, falling into the water, closed the entrance to the cavern sufficiently for no person to pass through.

"Glorious!" said Tom. "There's no possible way now for any one else to 'spot' this water-cave!"

"It sartin'tly is a beautiful rendezvous," said Haskins.

Then he went on to explain how he had discovered it, and, by the time he had finished, the three had reached the summit of the elevation.

"No one kin see us on top of this hight, unless we choose to show ourselves," said Haskins.

The three, unseen by the savages, watched the latter until they withdrew.

"Now, then, we'll hev something to eat," said Haskins.

They made a table of a rocky shelf, and partook of a frugal but nourishing repast.

"I think," Tom then said, "that the 'darker,' Jim Jumble, has escaped capture. We have seen nothing of him since we left him in the earth hollow."

Both he and Haskins took a keen survey of the wooded hill in which the negro had been left.

"Oh, dear! What kind of an animal is that?" inquired Minnie, pointing out a black, ball-like object, which suddenly made its appearance on the hillside.

Haskins looked at it long and earnestly.

"Halloa!" he suddenly cried, "if it isn't the head of that little nigger!"

"You are right. It is he, sure enough," said Tom. "He's taking a survey from his hole before venturing forth."

"Now he is looking this way," said Haskins. "Perhaps we kin attract his attention."

The three waved kerchiefs, but it was some time ere Jumble appeared to see them.

Then he emerged from the hole, and slowly approached the lake.

Suddenly he paused. He seemed to think that the kerchiefs were merely a lure to bring him into the power of the savages. Vainly did Tom and Haskins jump up on the ledge, showing their whole forms to the "darker." He evidently believed they were Indians, and took to his heels, soon vanishing in a thicket on the right.

"Dey don't fool dis chile, in no sech way as dat," he muttered, as he ran on. "Dressed up in de attire ob de slain, dey would 'gull' dis nig into t'inking dey's his friends!"

When he had proceeded some distance he sat down on a stump to rest. Then up he rose again, and on he went.

He took a direction which led him toward the rendezvous Haskins had lately abandoned.

Seeing the opening before him, he crawled into it, which he had scarcely done, when he felt a hand seize his wool with a most tenacious grasp.

Jumble gave a yell.

"Oh! for de Lor's sake! Massa Injun!" he howled, "spare dis nig's wool, and he'll be yer bounden slabe forebbermore!"

There was a burst of half smothered laughter.

"Nol nol!" continued Jumble, "don't go fur to cut me wid dat knife! Oh, don't! don't! don't!" he squeaked, wildly flourishing his legs.

"Shut up, yer black fool! It's no Injun, but me—Trapper John!"

"Am dat so?" cried the boy, joyfully.

"T'anks be to me and de Lord!"

John now let go of the negro's hair.

"How came you hyar?" he inquired.

Jumble told his story.

"So that boy and girl are together again," said John, fiercely.

"Dar's whar dey is, now!" said Jumble, solemnly, pointing upward; "in dat blessed land whar all am free and equal—whar de black and de white angels all sing de Hallelujah logedder!"

"Have they been killed? You didn't tell me that."

"It's presumbable dey hab."

"You are not shore. You did not see their dead bodies?"

"No, sah, but ef dey wasn't killed, whar can dey be? I saw nothing ob dem, af'er I came out ob de hole."

Jumble did not mention the two figures who had signaled to him from the top of the height. He feared that, if he did, Trapper John might insist that the two were not Indians, and might force him to guide him to the place.

"Come with me," said John. "Hyar, git up, and move along."

"Whar's yer goin', sah?" inquired Jim.

"To hunt fur the 'farnal cuss who killed the sheriff, of course."

The "darker" crawled out of the cave, and he and John proceeded on their way.

In the afternoon they emerged from the thicket upon a broad field, having something the appearance of a prairie.

In the distance rose the peaks of the mountains, which the "darker" had previously attempted to cross with Minnie and Tom Tabor.

"Down! down!" cried John, suddenly crouching in the long grass.

"What's de matter?" gasped the "darker," as he almost doubled himself up in the grass.

"Injuns!" answered John.

"Goll-a mighty! Is dey comin' dis way?"

"No; they don't see us yet. They hev bosses with 'em, which I don't doubt they've stolen. I'm goin' to hev one o' them hosses, as it's easier ridin' than walkin'."

"How's yer goin' to git it?"

"You jest stay hyar and wait fur me, and yer'll see. I'll git two ef I kin—one fur you and one fur me. Kin yer ride?"

"I's used to ridin', dar's a fac'. I can keep my place on a hoss wid some 'spectability."

John now crawled swiftly and cautiously through the grass toward the savages, who he perceived were Crows. The band, numbering twenty, had encamped near the mountains, and were allowing their horses to crop the herbage near where their tents were pitched.

John, crouching in the grass within a hundred yards of their camp, waited until one of the horses was within a few feet of him, when he sprung forward and seized the animal by the bridle.

Vaulting quickly upon the back of the steed, he grasped the bridle of another near it, and away he went.

The moment the savages saw this maneuver, they sprung to their feet with a yell and rushed in pursuit.

Several of them tried to catch and mount the other horses, but the latter, taking fright at the din which was made, scampered off over the field, toward the spot where the "darker" was hidden.

"De good Lord hab mercy on dis nig now!" murmured Jumble. "I's trampled to def, sbuah as I's born!"

And still keeping himself concealed by the long grass, he commenced to roll like a black ball away from the spot the frightened coursers were approaching.

But it seemed almost as if the horses knew exactly where he was, and that they were deter-

mined to stamp out his life, for now, slightly changing their course, they came on, making straight for him.

All at once the crack of a rifle split the air; and making a flying leap, as it passed the "darky," the horse bestrode by Trapper John emptied its rider at the negro's feet with a bullet through his brain!

CHAPTER XIX.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

THE fright of the little "darky" knew no bounds. He turned a somersault, and for an instant stood upon his head with his heels in air.

"I's dead now, shuah! Help—help! Lif' me up on yer wings, some good brack angel, and save de precious life ob dis poor chile!"

As he spoke, he flopped over upon his side, and crouched behind the dead body of Trapper John.

With distorted nostrils and foaming at the mouth, the frightened horses, now within a few yards of the negro, came on.

Impelled by the impulse of fear, Jumble raised the dead body of John upright before the maddened steeds.

One of them rearing, its hind legs sunk into the mud of a little pond of water, and down it went, falling upon its side, so close to the "darky" that to prevent its rolling over upon him as it endeavored to rise, he seized it by the mane and tried to push its neck away from him.

The horse sprung up so suddenly, that the black was lifted with it, and in order to save himself from falling under its heels, he flopped over upon its back, throwing both arms around its neck. The steed, flinging up its hind legs, tried to hurl him from its back, but Jumble also throwing up his heels, as if to keep time with these movements, maintained his place.

"Hoo-ool! hoo-ool! whoo oo-oo!" yelled the Indians behind, as they bounded along in pursuit.

Bang! went a rifle, at the same moment, and one of the bullets grazed the negro's left heel.

"Murdah! murdah! Dey's scalpin' my heels, and dey'll keep on, till dey rips all de skin from my body! Git dap! yer hoss! Make de fire fly! Oh, say! go it, won't yer, yer bressed angel! Do go it, I beg ob yer, and sabe Jumble's life!"

Bang! went another rifle, and this time the bullet grazed the top of the negro's head.

He gave a yell louder than that of the Indians.

The horse, with a wild snort on hearing the hideous noise so close to its ears, shot forward like lightning.

Jumble cast a frightened glance behind him, but when he perceived how rapidly the horse distanced its pursuers, he began to gather courage, and raising his huge horse-pistol, while he still held to the courser with one hand, he shook his weapon defiantly at the Indians.

On went the horse, and soon it had left the field far behind it, and was speeding along the more rugged paths, leading toward the lake.

"I's safe now, shuah!" cried Jumble. "Ef dat wasn't a brave feat ob mine, to mount de hoss in de berry faces ob dem Injuns, and gallop off from under dar berry noses! I's a second Gen'l Putnam—I is!"

But just then, to his horror, he perceived not far off, a Crow, who had succeeded in mounting one of the horses, in pursuit of him.

"Stop! black-face!" yelled the savage, "or me quick shoot!"

And as he spoke, sitting, without holding to the bridle, by pressing both knees firmly against each side of the beast, he pointed his rifle toward the negro.

"Oh! Massa Injun!" cried the latter. "I'd stop de hoss ef I could, but he won't stop! For de Lord's sake, don't fire off dat ins'tument, and I'll try and be wid yer soon as posserble!"

"Pull on horse-rein, and try stop!" shouted the Indian.

"Any'ting in dis worl' to oblige yer!" answered Jumble.

He jerked at the reins, and made every effort to stop the animal, but the latter flew on.

Crack! went the rifle of the savage.

The bullet passed close to the "darky's" temple.

With a scream of terror, he now whirled round, so that his heels were toward the courser's head and his face was close to its tail.

This tail Jumble grasped with both hands, using it not only for a support but also for a shield, striving to hold it upright before his face.

The Indian was reloading his piece.

"He's a-goin' to fire again!" gasped the "darky," as he peered at the savage from behind the tail. "Oh, Lord! What will become ob dis nig?"

By the time the Indian had reloaded, Jumble's horse had reached the strip of marshy land stretched out from this side of the lake.

Its speed as it plowed through the swamp was diminished, enabling the pursuers to gain. His rifle was a second time pointed toward the fugitive, now at so short a range that the negro must have been hit, had he fired. But, at that critical moment the ring of a piece was heard ahead, from the summit of the high rising from the lake, and the Indian, throwing up his hands and making a clutch at the empty air, rolled off his horse, stone dead—a bullet having passed through his heart.

The horse, whirling to the right, now dashed off, and he was soon a long distance from the spot where the rider had fallen.

The "darky" endeavored to stop the animal upon which he rode, but it kept on, and, finally with a wild neigh, it plunged into the lake.

Jumble, who was a good swimmer, slipped off the horse's back and struck out for the shore but ere he could reach it he saw, not far off, the rest of the Crows coming toward the lake.

"I's gone—I's los'," he cried, "de las' hope ob my life am departed now! Come back, you bressed angel—come back, won't yer?" he added, addressing the steed which he had ridden, and which having now gained the opposite bank, was about to gallop off.

The horse of course paid no attention to his prayers, but away it went.

Jumble now whirled round, and also swam for the opposite bank. In doing so, he was obliged to pass the base of the cliff rising from the lake. Turning to look round, he perceived that his enemies were not more than a hundred feet distant, and that one of them had pointed a rifle at his head.

"Oh! Goll-a-mighty!" he yelled.

Bang! went the rifle, and the bullet struck the water in front of Jumble, who at once turned a somersault, in his terror, throwing up his heels.

Just as he rose to the surface, he felt something clutch both of his legs with an iron grip!

Then it seemed as if the "darky's" white eyeballs would burst, so far did they protrude from their sockets.

He made frantic efforts to escape the grasp, which kept tightening upon his "shins," while his cries of terror rung upon the air.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!" Now I's gone—gone—gone! Shuah as I's born, dar's an 'alligator' got hol' ob me, under de water! I didn't tink dar was any ob dem t'ings beah!"

His further utterance died away in a gurgle, as he was jerked under the surface! He felt himself dragged on, but, suddenly, to his surprise and intense relief, he rose, in a water-cave, with Tom Tabor and Haskins on each side of him, and with Minnie on the rocks, watching him!

"Now, den!" said the darky, as he crawled upon the rocks and looked at his rescuers, "tell me am dis hebben, or am I dreamin' on dat interes'in' subject?"

"What did you think had hold of you?" inquired Tom, laughing.

"Tink? Why ob course I guessed well enough. It takes a great deal to deprive me ob de won'erful self-possession by which I's extinguished!"

Again Tom laughed.

"You showed your self-possession on the back of that horse," he said.

"Didn't I? Did yer see me shake my pis'l at dem rascals? Say, did yer? Did yer see me come de Gen'l Putnam ober dem?"

And, as he spoke, Jumble, folding his arms, strutted to and fro with a martial air.

CHAPTER XX.

THE APPARITION.

SOME explanations were now made, after which the little party in the water-cave ascended to the summit of the peak.

The Indians remembering their previous experience near the lake, withdrew into the woods the moment Jumble disappeared.

Haskins now noticed that the provisions in his own and Tom's wallet were running short.

"To-morrow morning I'll hev to go and see ef I can't shoot a deer," he remarked.

"I will go with you," said Tom.

"No, you must stay, hyar, with the gal, but you kin keep a sort of a lookout for me, ef you like."

Just at dawn, next day, Haskins set out on his expedition, taking Jumble with him, although the "darky" tried to avoid going by pleading a rheumatic lameness about the region of the "shins."

Minnie and Tom watched the two until they were out of sight.

"I have a sort of presentiment that our good friend, the hunter, will get into trouble," said the girl.

"I am afraid he will. If there are any Indians prowling about, the report of his rifle must draw them toward him."

"Suppose anything serious should happen to him and the negro?"

"In that case you would still have me to protect you," said Tom, "which I would do to the very last."

"I have perfect confidence in you, on account of what you have already done for me," said Minnie, with a grateful glance of her bright black eyes.

"I could never tire of doing for you," said Tom. "The truth is," added the boy, lowering his voice, "you are just the sort of girl I like."

"LIKE?" said Minnie, blushing.

"Not not like, but love—that's the word!" cried Tom, "and if I thought you could love me—"

"Oh, Tom," said Minnie, nestling close to his side, and allowing him to retain her hand, which he had seized.

"I—I—like you, too."

"LIKE?" said Tom.

"What should I say? Come, you must not force me to own too much, even though there could not be a better time to say it."

"Say it, then," said Tom.

"Say what?"

"That you love me."

"Well, then, I—I—I do!"

Tom threw an arm about her waist, but she coyly withdrew herself from it.

"Not now. Let us say no more on the subject, now."

As she spoke, Tom suddenly bowed his head on his hands.

"I forgot," he cried, bitterly. "Yes, I forgot."

"Forgot what?"

"Some other time I will tell you," answered Tom, over whose mind now hovered that terrible shadow—the thought that it was his father who had killed the father of the girl he loved!

Hours passed, but Haskins did not return.

Toward sundown Tom fancied he heard the report of a rifle in the distance.

"I must go and look for the hunter," said the lad. "You will be safe here."

Minnie tried to detain him, but Tom felt that it was his duty to look for the man who had done so much for him.

It was growing dark, and the boy was about to descend to the water-cave, when he fancied he saw a figure approaching.

"It is Jim Jumble!" he cried.

In fact it was the "darky," who was rapidly hurrying toward the lake.

"Oh! deah, what drefful news I's got to be de bearer ob!" he gasped, as he drew near.

Just as he reached the shore he beheld a dark, shadowy form coming toward him in the willow canoe, which the Indians left in the lake.

With a howl of horror he crouched among the reeds on the bank.

"Injuns!" he cried. "Oh, now, jes' as I comes to de stronghol', I's to be scalped by dem Injins! Help! help!"

"Hush!" came a low, stern voice. "Halloa! Jim Jumble as I live! Where are you going? Where is your mistress?"

But the "darky" answered not. As the man sprung from the canoe, grasping him by the collar and raising him to his feet, he perceived that the living object he held was as limp as a rag. In fact the boy had fainted.

"What nonsense!" said the man impatiently.

He sprinkled the negro's face with water, again and again, but Jumble gave no sign of returning animation.

All at once up sprung the little negro, running off as fast as he could go.

The man, who was a strong-looking fellow, soon perceived his absence, and away he went, in pursuit of the fleeing figure, which he could see indistinctly through the gloom.

Tom and Minnie could dimly make out, from their position, those two figures, the smaller one some distance ahead of the other.

"What does it mean?" inquired the girl.

"I can't see them at all, now," said Tom, "but, if I'm not much mistaken, Jumble is being pursued by some one—probably not an Indian, but Trapper John, or one of his men. I must go to help him."

"And I will go with you," said Minnie. "I am afraid he will beat the poor fellow, and you might not succeed in stopping him, whereas he would stop at once for me."

Tom could not dissuade her from her intention, and the two descending to the water-cave were soon striking out for the bank.

The moment they reached it they started forward, but they could now see no sign of the two persons they pursued.

Ahead of them, however, they finally beheld the bright light of a fire, near which were collected half a dozen wild, fierce-looking young fellows, armed "to the teeth," whom they recognized as members of the Lynch-law Gang.

As they drew nearer, they saw Haskins lying, bound hand and foot, close to the party.

Tom, still followed by Minnie, hurried to the spot.

"What does this mean?" the boy inquired.

"It means that we've at last got the coon we've been huntin' fur," answered a dark-browed youth, named Janson, "and I don't know as you've anything to say about it."

"This man has never harmed you, in any way," cried Tom.

"He's harmed some one else, though. We Lynch-gang 'Wolves' hev him in our clutches, at last!"

"I sent the 'darky' to tell you whar I was, and what my fate would be," said Haskins ere Tom could reply.

"No, Haskins, you—"

"What's that yer call him?" interrupted Janson. "His name ain't Haskins—it's Tabor—Ned Tabor. Is it so long sence yer've see'd yer father, that yer don't know him?"

Tom started as if shot.

"My God! is this so?" he gasped.

"Shore's you're born, he's yer father—the man that killed Sheriff Lormer!"

"It is true that you are my son," the hunter now said. "You had no suspicion that I was your father?"

"No, because it is so long since I saw you at home, and you then wore no beard. Why did you not tell me who you were before?"

"Ef anything had happened to me, it would hev grieved you more to know who I was. Therefore, I concluded to keep the secret, and see ef I came out all right, 'fore I told you. As things have happened, though, you've now found it out."

The boy could see that Minnie was no less affected than himself.

She had drawn back, her tears falling fast and sobs agitating her young frame.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

Tom sprung forward, and drew the girl to one side.

"You will forgive me for not telling you who I was," he said, in a low voice. "I could not bear to break up our friendship. I never hoped for anything else, for I was certain that when you knew all you would hate me."

"Alas! you are not to blame!" said the girl.

"I know that. Still, never could I bear the thought of asking you to be mine—my wife, after this, for I would not be willing to wed with the girl whose father mine had killed."

"Oh! Tom!" was all she could say, while sobs still convulsed her frame.

"No," continued the boy. "All is over between us now. We can never be anything to each other."

He then turned away and went to his father, who was calling him.

"My dear boy," said he. "I am accused of having killed the sheriff, but it is not true. I did not kill him."

"You are innocent?" cried Tom.

"Yes, as innocent as you are."

The lad gave a cry of joy.

"They all say that," sneered Janson. "As we don't believe it, you've got to be lynched."

"You have no right to do that!" exclaimed Tom, with flashing eyes, "for he has had no trial."

"That don't matter. Hyar, git the rope ready, boys!"

A youth with a rope climbed a tree, and threw one end of the line over a branch.

But young Tabor seized the rope and pulled it down.

Then drawing his pistol, he stood by his parent.

"The first who lays a hand on my father dies!" the Boy Fugitive cried.

"I see we'll hev to make you a pris'ner, too!" cried Janson.

Minnie now stepped forward.

"Tom is right!" she cried. "His father should have a trial; but I no longer believe he is guilty!"

"God bless you for those words!" exclaimed Tom.

Janson frowned darkly.

"Seize that boy!" he said to his companions.

They gave a yell and made a rush toward the

lad, who pulled the trigger of his pistol. But he had forgotten that his late submersion had spoiled the charge contained in the weapon, which did not go off.

The next moment he was a prisoner, and the preparations for his father's execution were continued.

The rope, with the noose at one end, soon was ready.

The noose was placed about the neck of the hunter, who, with his hands still tied, had been made to stand up.

In spite of the threats and protestations of Tom Tabor and the entreaties of Minnie, Janson told his comrades to take hold of the other end of the rope, and to stand by to pull.

They had already done so, and the fierce youth was about to give the final order to them to haul, when two persons were seen rapidly approaching, one of them, in a loud authoritative voice, commanding the men to desist.

As the gang hesitated, still holding the rope, the speaker came so near that the light of the fire fell upon his face.

"The sheriff!" yelled all simultaneously.

"By the 'tarnall so it is!" cried Janson, in astonishment. "It is Sheriff Lormer! the very man we thought was murdered is hyar, alive and well!"

"Father!" cried Minnie, springing forward, and falling, almost fainting, upon the breast of her parent, who folded her in his arms.

"In de name ob humanity, in de name ob de sheriff, come to life ag'in, after many trials and tribelations, I commands de adjournment ob dis committee, ob which I constertute myself de chairman!" said Jim Jumble, strutting forward with his huge horse pistol in his hand.

Tom Tabor and his father were now liberated.

"Please explain what all this means," said Janson to his late prisoner. "I own now I was in the wrong; but you yerself must know that thar war good reasons fur suspecting yer."

"Yes, I'll own that," said Ned Tabor, "and it was because circumstances were so strong against me that I thought it worth my while to keep concealed from your Lynch-gang 'Wolves,' who were hunting for me, hoping that some proof of my innocence would be found."

"The truth of the matter is soon told," said the sheriff. "Tabor and I met near the bank of the Black creek. After some conversation, we indulged in a playful wrestle. My foot catching against a root, I pitched headlong into the stream, my rifle going off as I fell."

"The current carried me round a bend in the stream ere I rose to the surface. I clutched a branch and drew myself on shore among some bushes, when the branch broke, and my head striking a stone as I dropped I was made unconscious."

"That was the last I knew until I found myself among a wandering party of Indians. These

savages had lately been defeated in a battle with the Crows, and were retreating when they saw me. They picked me up and carried me some distance ere I came to. They retained me prisoner, saying they would keep me until some one should offer them a ransom for me.

"I was finally taken to their camp many miles from here. An Indian woman there became my friend. She concealed me one night in a cave unknown to her people. Every day she brought me provisions. The savages were making a diligent search for me, saying they would kill me if they should find me. Thus day after day passed, the Indian woman not daring to send me forth from my retreat, lest I should be captured by her people, who were still searching for me.

"At last, however, she found a chance to lead me from the retreat and to guide me to a place whence I might pursue my way homeward. After many hardships, I arrived last night at a lake, where, to my surprise, I fell in with my servant Jim Jumble, then on his way from Ned Tabor, who had sent him to apprise his son of his capture. The 'darker' took me for a ghost and ran off in terror until I caught him and proved to him that I was real flesh and blood. It seems I arrived here just in time to prevent the execution of an innocent man."

"After you fell into the Black creek," said Ned Tabor, "I ran along the bank, looking if I could see you come up to the surface. I must have passed the place where you were really lying unconscious in the shrubbery on the other side of the bank, for I saw nothing of you and believed that you had been drowned."

The sheriff now reprimanded the Lynch-Gang for having been in so great a hurry to hang their prisoner.

"This hurried lynching has become too common and should be stopped," he rejoined.

"I'm mou'ty glad you came when you did," said Janson, "fur me and my 'Wolves' are the last persons that would want to hang a man who wasn't guilty."

"Well, be careful in future."

Next morning the whole party set out on their return home.

In due time Lormer and his daughter reached their native village, which was a few miles from Denver.

Tom had obtained permission, both from the sheriff and his daughter, to visit them, and a couple of years later he made the girl his wife.

Ned Tabor had given up his hunter life for a more lucrative vocation, and on the day of his son's marriage he presented him with a deed, which entitled him to a fine house in Denver.

The young couple kept Jumble for a servant. The negro retained this situation until his "oratorical powers" captivated the chunky Susanna Lily Mapletop, a colored girl, whom he married and carried off to Nebraska.

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